

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Volunteers, printshop produce
Pathfinder books jointly

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 62 NO. 27 JULY 13, 1998

Puerto Rico: 'This is a strike of the people'

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL
AND VERÓNICA POSES

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — A sea of fluttering Puerto Rican flags filled the avenue in front of the telephone company's central facility here as striking telephone workers, joined by hundreds of other workers, many on their lunch breaks, rallied June 30 to oppose the sale of the state-owned corporation

Help build July 25 actions for Puerto Rican independence

— page 8

to a private consortium led by GTE. Some carried signs with the words "Puerto Rico is not for sale," while many marched behind a hand-painted banner declaring "We are a nation."

Although the noontime rally created a huge traffic jam on one of the city's main thoroughfares, many drivers clearly enjoyed becoming part of the action. Dozens drove by waving flags out their windows, dropping contributions into strikers' buckets, and raising a din of honks and shouts of approval.

"See you Tuesday!" yelled a passing bus driver as he joined the honking chorus. He was referring to the general strike called for

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Washington launches missile attack on Iraq

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

A U.S. warplane patrolling southern Iraq fired a missile at an Iraqi antiaircraft installation June 30. On patrol in the area were four U.S. F-16 fighter jets flying out of Saudi Arabia, two U.S. EA-6B electronic jamming aircraft, and four British Tornados. Iraqi government officials called the attack "an aggressive and unjustifiable action" and said the missile hit a drinking water reservoir near Basra.

Nearly 200 imperialist warplanes regularly patrol the region, flying 80-120 missions a day. Washington, which has been enforcing a "no-fly zone" in southern Iraq since 1992, claimed that Baghdad aimed radar at one of the four British jets. "If our aircraft or those of our allies are threatened, it will be met with a very big response," declared U.S. defense secretary William Cohen. He called the shooting "an act of self-defense."

The last U.S. military assault on Iraq was in 1996 when warplanes fired missiles at antiaircraft batteries in the country.

The U.S. government has maintained two "no-fly zones" over nearly two-thirds of Iraqi territory, in which the movement of any Iraqi aircraft or heavy weaponry on the ground is barred. Baghdad also faces U.S.-led sanctions imposed since 1990, which

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GM strikes take center stage in U.S. labor battles

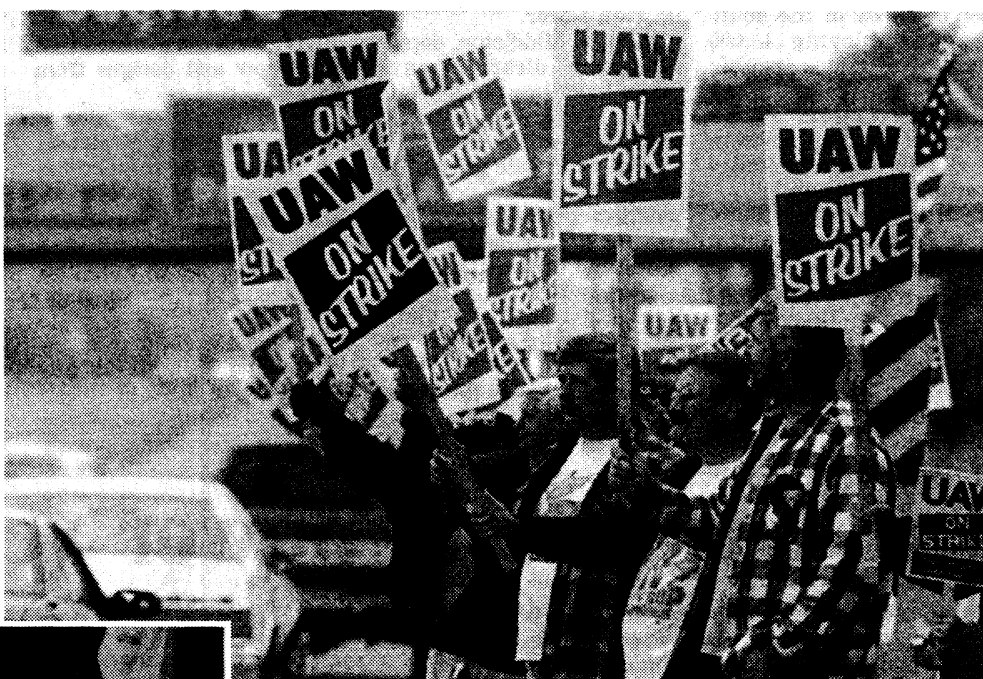
Auto workers, bosses dig in for a fight

BY JOHN SARGE

FLINT, Michigan — The strikes by 9,200 workers at two General Motors plants here is turning into a showdown between the world's largest auto maker and the United Auto Workers (UAW). In the last week of June, GM shut down almost all of its assembly plants and other operations in North America and announced it will try to prevent the laid-off unionists from collecting unemployment compensation. Meanwhile, workers at two GM brake plants in Dayton, Ohio, voted to authorize their own strike.

On June 5, 3,400 UAW Local 659 members walked out of GM's Flint Metal Center over health and safety, outsourcing, subcontracting, and working conditions. Six days later 5,800 members of UAW Local 651 struck at Delphi East, on the other side

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Left: Militant/Kathy Mickells

Above, UAW members picket GM in Flint June 29. At left, Nancy Cole, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress in Philadelphia, at rally to support SEPTA strikers June 10. Striker signs petition to put her on the ballot. Socialists are selling *Militant* and building active workers conference (see ad on page 5) at plant gates and picket lines as they join these labor battles. On the morning of July 2, four socialist workers from Chicago and Des Moines, Iowa, sold 44 copies of the *Militant* at gate of Anheuser-Busch brewery in St. Louis, where a contract battle has been simmering.



Socialists build active workers conference at plant gates, campuses

BY KEVIN DWIRE

CLEVELAND — *Militant* supporters from Cleveland and Cincinnati sold 13 copies of the paper at a strike authorization vote for United Auto Workers Local 696 at the General Motors Delphi brake plants in Dayton, Ohio, June 30. The sales team was one of many activities by socialists in this area to build the July 11-12 Active Workers Conference in Pittsburgh.

The auto workers in Dayton approved the strike authoriza-

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40,000 construction workers protest in N.Y.

BY OLGA RODRÍGUEZ

NEW YORK — Nearly 40,000 union carpenters, plumbers, and electrical workers converged on the headquarters of the Metropolitan Transit Authority June 30, to protest the MTA's award of a major contract to a nonunion construction firm. The construction workers then fanned out and picketed various nonunion construction sites in the midtown area.

There were dozens of arrests and injuries, as the cops — caught off-guard by the mas-

Continued on Page 14



March of 40,000 construction workers through New York City June 30

N.Y. cop is convicted in death of Anthony Baez — page 10

Israeli gov't uses settlements to expand deeper into W. Bank

The Israeli Cabinet approved a plan June 21 to expand the city limits of Jerusalem by 50 percent by placing nearby Zionist settlements in the Palestinian West Bank under an "umbrella [municipal] authority" — a virtual annexation of that land. This move has caused widespread objection from Palestinians. The Arab League, with 22 member states, issued a written statement that called the "dangerous decision" by the Israeli government a way to "give Israel full control of the holy city [Jerusalem], obliterate its Arab entity and change its demographic feature." The Arab League states that such a move on Jerusalem — the place that both the Israeli and Palestinian governments claim as a capital city — violates the 1995 accords between Tel Aviv and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

U.S. officials initially called the Israeli government's action "provocative," but quickly toned down their criticisms and opposed a proposal by Arab governments to put the question on the floor of the UN Security Council for debate.

Russia: job actions spread

Thousands of unpaid workers in Russia continue to block roads and railways in the far eastern regions of the country June 23. According to local press reports, an estimated 10,000 people have joined the strikes. Energy workers from local power plants and utilities have joined pickets set up by miners in Ussuriysk, demanding immediate payment of up to eight months' wages. Workers from a submarine repair plant near Vladivostok are also on strike over a 15-month delay in wage payments. Hundreds of protesters are staging a sit-in in front of the regional government's offices in central Vladivostok. According to trade union officials, there were strikes at 1,283 companies in Russia during the first four months of this year.

Workers are increasingly directing their demands at the government. Two hundred

miners have been camping outside the main government building in Moscow for two weeks, refusing to leave until Russian president Boris Yeltsin resigns. The government's response to the economic crisis has been to propose a package of austerity measures that will cut social services in the name of boosting state revenues.

Thousands demand jobs in Italy

Hundreds of thousands of workers from all parts of Italy marched through the streets of Rome June 20, demanding that the government create more jobs. The crowd — estimated at 300,000 by organizers and 100,000 by the cops — rallied in central Rome and heard officials of the three main union federations. One of the demands was

to create jobs, particularly in the southern part of the country, where unemployment is nearly double the national average of 12.2 percent. Labor officials warned of strikes if the government does not move to ease the jobless situation.

Airline workers strike in Nepal

Air travel came to a grinding halt throughout Nepal June 25. The workers at Nepal Airlines walked off the job after the company refused to negotiate on demands made earlier in June.

S. Korean unemployment triples

The National Statistical Office in south Korea announced June 23 that a record 1.49 million people were out of work in May — triple the number just six months ago. The report noted that this fact increases concerns of renewed labor resistance that would hamper the government's plans to shut down unprofitable companies. The jobless rate rose to 6.9 percent in May, the highest level in more than 15 years. Unemployment in south Korea is expected to increase further, the report added, with newly passed laws that make it easier for bosses to dismiss workers.

The labor movement's response included a two-day general strike at the end of May called by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions against growing joblessness.

Teachers strike in Uruguay

Teachers on strike across Uruguay were

joined by secondary school teachers in the capital city of Montevideo June 23. The teachers' union is demanding that pay be more than doubled, and calling for better working conditions.

Canada: air traffic controllers vote to strike

Canadian air traffic controllers voted June 23 with 99 percent in favor of striking if a collective agreement is not reached with Nav Canada, the air navigation services organization. Workers in the Canadian Air Traffic Control Association have been without a contract since December of last year. Major issues in the talks include working conditions and hours of work. Negotiations between the union and the company have been going on since last October; an earlier agreement presented to the rank-and-file members in March was rejected by 95 percent.

U.S. court cuts miners benefits

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 25 that Eastern Enterprises, a company that included coal mines in West Virginia from 1946 to 1965 but is no longer in the coal industry, does not have to pay lifetime health insurance premiums for miners who had worked for them and for their survivors and families.

The Supreme Court, voting in a 5-to-4 vote, reversed lower court decisions to say that the health care requirement was an unconstitutional "taking" of company's property.

Miners first won the legal right to lifetime health benefits from their employers as a result of a 1946 nationwide strike that involved some 400,000 coal miners.

— MEGAN ARNEY AND BRIAN TAYLOR

'MILITANT' ANNOUNCES SUMMER PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

The *Militant* will be published biweekly from mid-July through August. The next issue, no. 28, will be printed and mailed Thursday, July 9. Issue no. 29 will be printed July 23; no. 30 on August 6, and no. 31 on August 20. We will resume weekly publication with issue no. 32, printed Thursday, September 3.

THE MILITANT

Support Puerto Rico telephone strikers

The Puerto Rican government has provoked a deep-seated frustration among working people there over the country's colonial status by trying to sell the state-owned Puerto Rican Telephone Company to private investors. The *'Militant'* covers this fight for dignity that increasingly poses the question of independence. Don't miss a single issue!



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Indonesian peasant activists describe struggle for land

BY PATRICK BROWN

BANDUNG, Indonesia — The West Java Peasants Union (SPJB) will "protect the poor from exploitation and oppression by government, rulers, and businessmen," Darsono, the chairperson of this new organization, told *Militant* reporters on June 8.

Darsono, who grows coconuts on three hectares of land near Bandung, the third largest city in Indonesia, was joined for this interview by several other activists, including Kasmidin, who farms one hectare with seasonal crops like cassava, and Suhdin, who grows vegetables on his three hectares and "has been fighting [for his land] since 1984."

Darsono explained that the official peasants' organization, the HKTI or Association of Farmers' Harmony of Indonesia, is a "dummy," dominated by big landowners and headed by an army general. The farmers decided to launch the SPJB publicly three weeks after President Suharto resigned under pressure from his local and foreign backers and in the face of growing social protests.

Peasants had provided bananas and other food to students who had rallied against Suharto outside the regional parliament in Bandung during May, Darsono explained. He added that many "unemployed rural workers donated 1,000 or 2,000 rupiahs from their own pockets" to assist the students.

In Darsono's view, Suharto's regime was "a continuation of Dutch colonialism," which dominated the "Dutch East Indies" until Indonesians won formal independence in 1949. Suharto had granted land concessions to "businesses, and his friends and family," he said.

Land use for profit

Of the 200-plus million people in Indonesia, more than half still live in the countryside, despite the trend for millions to migrate to the cities in search of work. In the last three decades increasing local and foreign capitalist investment has left a deep mark on agriculture.

Dianto Bachriadi, the deputy chairperson of the Consortium for Agrarian Reform (KPA), told the *Militant* earlier the same day that under the "green revolution" of the late 1960s, "landless peasants increased in number, as did the number of landlords." He explained that the high yield crops introduced at that time required expensive fertilizers and other inputs that were beyond the means of many peasants.

In recent years, the government has worked with the World Bank to make it easier for capitalist investors to take over land. The World Bank's loans are coupled to demands to "simplify ... procedures for land acquisition," as a KPA pamphlet puts it.

Dianto explained that land on Kalimantan and other islands has been taken from in-

igenous owners and turned over to plantations and mines, creating "an important source of conflict." Millions have been displaced due to logging and other activities.

Peasants' land on Java, where more than half the country's population is concentrated, has been turned into real estate, tourist areas, dams, and golf courses, Darsono reported. He described how farmers had planted teak wood in one area, only to have the wood claimed by the forestry department 20 years later when it was ready for felling.

'Transmigration'

The government's policy of moving people off Java and settling them on other islands has also been a disaster for working people. These measures are also backed by the World Bank. Under this "transmigration," the government has moved millions of people to the outer islands, claiming that Java is overpopulated.

The measures are also part of trying to subjugate the whole country — including areas like East Timor where people are fighting for independence — to Jakarta's control. Most of the land where the migrants are settled is already occupied by indigenous peoples, who are often displaced from the land they have worked for generations.

The migrants often use agricultural techniques from Java — a very fertile volcanic island — on "some of the poorest soils on earth," according to a report published in the May-June issue of *World Watch*, by the magazine's assistant editor Curtis Runyan. These transmigration projects "have increased poverty for both host communities and migrants, and worsened ecological destruction," he wrote.

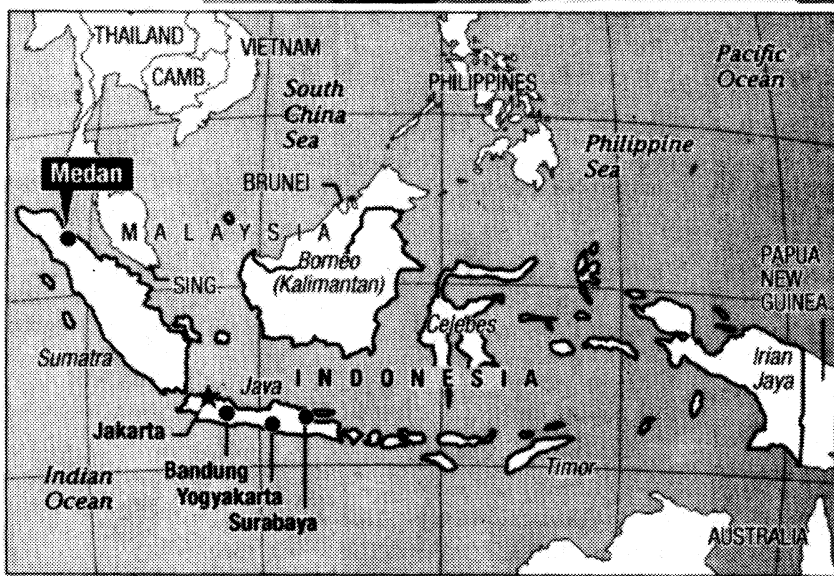
In discussions with Darsono, Dianto, and others, *Militant* reporters were given a striking picture of the diverse and uneven development of agriculture in Indonesia.

The agrarian census of 1993 reported that nearly 50 percent of peasant households own less than half a hectare of land, while just over 1 percent own more than 22 hectares. Some own more than 100,000 hectares. According to the government's National Land Agency, 20 percent of land in Bekasi, an area in the most developed part of Java, belongs to absentee landowners. Rice and other crops are still produced overwhelmingly by manual labor. There is not a tractor to be seen along the miles of rice paddies that line the train route between Jakarta and Bandung.



Militant/Naomi Craine

Peasant activists Darsono (center) and Suhdin (right) describe their struggle for land and democratic rights to *Militant* reporters through translator (left) June 8. Formation of West Java Peasants Union was announced a few days later, and a national peasants conference is planned for July. Since resignation of Suharto, Indonesian toilers feel more confident to press their demands. Conditions in agriculture vary widely across the archipelago.



Working people in the Indonesian countryside are exploited in a number of different ways. There are rice farmers who have to give a percentage of their crop to the landlord, small farmers who produce for the market, and laborers who toil for low wages on plantations.

Last year 2 million hectares of forest were sacrificed for these capitalist plantations. Fires on Kalimantan, Sumatra, and Sulawesi raged out of control, blackening the skies over much of Southeast Asia. In the article in *World Watch*, Runyan said, "Indonesian military police arrested more than 60 small-scale farmers for setting fires.... Satellite images revealed, however, that 80 percent of the fires began on timber and palm-oil plantations controlled by a few politically connected growers and timber barons."

Legacy of 1965-66 massacre

The SPJB's Darsono told *Militant* reporters that in the years after 1965-66 peasants were "makanan empuk" — easy pickings — for the landlords and capitalists.

He was referring to the bloodletting organized by the Indonesian military, with the backing of Washington and other imperialist powers, that brought Suharto's "New Order" regime to power. Between 500,000 and 1 million workers and peasants were massacred, accused of belonging to or supporting the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI).

The killings were carried out not only by the crack army troops, but by reactionary

mobs in the countryside backed by the landlords, who included a layer of the Muslim clergy.

The Communist Party had widespread support among peasants, as well as among workers in the cities. While there were spontaneous attempts to resist the assault in many villages, the PKI leadership proved incapable of mounting any organized defense and the party was crushed, along with the unions, peasant groups, and other mass organizations.

The Indonesian toilers were led to this disaster — a defeat for the international working class on the scale of the victory of fascism in Germany in the 1930s — by the policies carried out by the Stalinist leadership of the PKI.

With the backing of both Beijing and Moscow, the Communist Party followed a policy of supporting the government of President Sukarno. They refused to organize workers and farmers in defense of their interests, especially where these came into conflict with the procapitalist and authoritarian Sukarno. Meanwhile, the massacre was prepared and carried out by the military officers, to the applause of the imperialists and the local exploiters.

The legacy of the massacre can be seen in the heavy presence of the repressive forces in the countryside. "There is military in the plantations — and gangs," said Darsono.

Dianto of the KPA described how over the years the military has staged exercises in rural areas, arrested peasant activists on criminal charges, and forcibly removed peasant families or entire villages from their lands.

Military officers have benefited from government agrarian policies, going back to the nationalization of Dutch properties in 1958 and extending to the more recent land-grabbing exercises. "The managers of estates came from army officers," said Dianto, emphasizing that "the army is a counterforce for land reform."

But the struggles of recent years demonstrate that the military's capacity to instill paralyzing fear has begun to weaken. SPJB activist Suhdin told us that in 1988 he was jailed for eight months, "charged with inciting hatred against the government. They thought this would discourage me," he said "but after my release I became more actively involved, because the law had been broken by those who made it."

Several days after the *Militant* spoke to these fighters, the SPJB was launched publicly in Bandung. A national conference of peasants' organizations is being planned for July. "Suharto's stepping down is a new hope," Darsono told the *Militant* in concluding our interview. "Finally we will have a chance to voice our concerns."

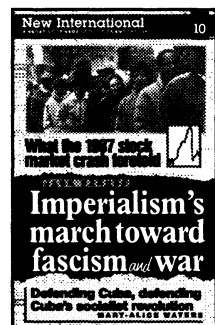
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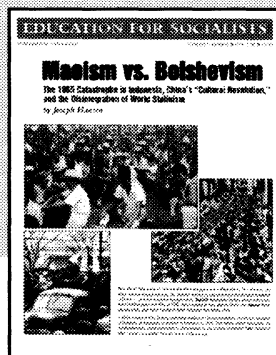
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Volunteers assume new responsibilities in preparing Pathfinder books for print shop

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

On June 29 Peggy Brundy sent Pathfinder the index of *Sexism and Science* in electronic format. It was the last piece of the body of the book, written by Evelyn Reed and published by Pathfinder Press, that supporters of the communist movement produced in digital form. This is the second title being reprinted as a joint product of volunteers and Pathfinder's print shop. It is due for delivery on July 8.

"Within a day we'll send Pathfinder *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* digitized," said Brundy in a telephone interview from her home in Oakland, California, July 1. "I am now checking the formatting of several chapters." Brundy is a new member of a steering committee based in the San Francisco Bay Area that organizes supporters of the communist movement around the world to put into electronic format Pathfinder's entire back list of some 350 titles.

The digital files of the books are then used to produce printing plates through modern computer-to-plate (CTP) technology, bypassing labor-intensive, highly skilled, and costly processes such as stripping film. This new method of production will allow Pathfinder to keep its arsenal in stock through short runs that cost less and with a smaller

and less complex print shop.

The number of volunteers has grown rapidly in the last month, from 96 at the beginning of June to 137 now, according to Brundy.

Formatting of *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, the final stage of preparation of a book's electronic files, was done in its entirety by Robbie Scherr, a supporter of the Socialist Workers Party in Seattle. "It took us less than a week to format this book, check it, and correct errors," she said. Scherr has a job in desktop publishing during the day and volunteers her time to digitize Pathfinder books after work.

"We feel the urgency to do this quickly because of what is happening around the world," said Scherr. "One example is the response Pathfinder books got at the recent Tehran bookfair."

Volunteer organizers are planning to finish putting in electronic format another four books in July — *American Labor Struggles*, *Women and the Cuban Revolution*, *Writings of Leon Trotsky: 1932*, and *Leon Trotsky Speaks*. At an expanded meeting of the steering committee in Oakland, California, June 19-21, they also adopted a plan to produce an average of 10 titles per month for the last half of 1998. This is what's needed to keep

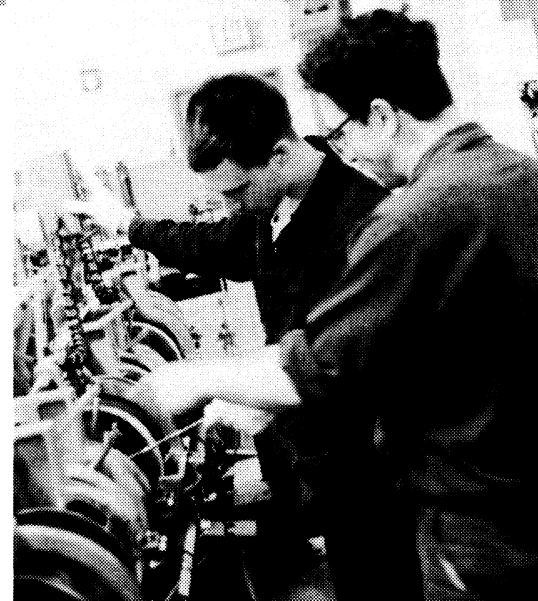


Militant photos/Top: Ruth Cheney; Right: Hilda Cuzco

Above (left to right), Toni Gorton, Peggy Brundy, and Jerry Gardner at June 19-21 meeting in Oakland, California, where volunteer organizers decided to take new steps to prepare books in electronic format for Pathfinder's print shop. Book production is now a joint product of volunteers and the shop. On right, José Aravena (right) and Doug Nelson run stitcher at Pathfinder print shop's bindery.

pace with the rate of books and pamphlets going out of stock at the publishers current average rate of sales. All reprints of titles Pathfinder publishes, or is responsible for keeping in print and distributing, will now be

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A call to all volunteers

Printed below are major excerpts from a letter to volunteers by Ruth Cheney, who is heading up the steering committee organizing supporters of the communist movement around the world to digitize Pathfinder books.

June 26, 1998
Oakland, California

Dear Comrades,

At a three-day meeting last weekend, the Northern California Bay Area-based steering committee of the internationalist effort to put some 350 Pathfinder publications into electronic format voted to take on a goal of dramatically increasing our output in order to produce 10 Pathfinder titles a month. Included in this decision is, beginning with some pilot projects, taking responsibility for volunteer production of the *entire* book — including photo signatures, illustrations, and book covers. Accomplishing this goal will take a disciplined effort by every Pathfinder volunteer in cities around the globe.

Comrades know from reading the *Militant* that *The Revolution Betrayed* was recently the first Pathfinder title produced with computer-to-plate technology, with the digitizing of the text — from scanning to proofreading to formatting — being done entirely by volunteers; many of you were involved in that process.

We decided to fight to get two more titles printed by the time of the July 11-12 Active Workers Conference in Pittsburgh: *Sexism and Science*, and *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*. In the past few days, many volunteers have received urgent phone calls and e-mail asking for your help in meeting this challenging goal.

We also voted on a goal for the rest of 1998 that includes producing 34 books, 17 pamphlets, 5 Education for Socialists, and 3 *New Internationals* — a total of 59 publications in a little more than five months. And we want each of these titles to adhere to Pathfinder's high standards of quality — which the new printing of *The Revolution Betrayed* certainly does. We also have a functioning web site where volunteers can get important political and technical materials like key *Militant* articles on this effort, the proof-

reading guidelines, scanning and message instructions, and templates for formatting. The web site address is: <http://www.pfvolcenter.com>

... Currently, more than 130 people have volunteered to help do the scanning, proofreading, formatting, cover design and digitizing, and graphics digitizing involved in each volume....

The report by Mary-Alice Waters ["Transforming Pathfinder book production as we respond to growing workers' resistance," given at an international socialist conference in Toronto, Ontario, and printed in the June 1 *Militant*] along with the ad for the Active Workers Conference in the June 22, 1998, *Militant*, give a good indication of the main lines of what we discussed at our meeting: the relationship between the reorganization of labor in the party print shop and the international volunteer brigade digitizing Pathfinder books, and the importance to the communist movement of the increased leverage provided by friends of the party who want to help. The decision to reduce the size of the party's print shop through installing the most advanced printing technology can only work if our steering committee is able to organize all the volunteers to provide Pathfinder with a steady supply of high-quality digital files, which are complete and ready to print, from cover to index, from photos to table of contents.

The only way to accomplish the necessarily much-increased pace and scope of book production is by organizing every volunteer, in a much more timely and effective manner. Many frustrated volunteers have been waiting quite a while for some work to be sent to them; we want to solve that problem immediately. In addition, we often send out work with no guidance as to how quickly we need it back. We also realized that many volunteers with skills in certain areas like design and formatting — which we are weakest in right now — are not being properly utilized.

Call to Action

We need volunteers now for the following tasks:

1. Joining our new design/cover digitization team. For this, we are especially interested in those comrades who have skills in using the programs Adobe Photoshop,

Quark Express, and Adobe Illustrator, as well as those who have design experience. This team will be responsible for designing templates for each publication; redesigning covers, where necessary; and helping to figure out the best way to digitize or reconstruct covers we already have for which there are no electronic files yet.

2. Joining our new graphics digitization team. For this, we think it will be useful to have volunteers with some knowledge and appreciation of photography. This department will be responsible for digitizing, with the best possible quality, the photos, drawings, and other black-and-white artwork for each Pathfinder title.

3. We need more volunteers to join our formatting team. A knowledge of Microsoft Word is especially useful for this work, as well as some experience in desktop publishing. This department is responsible for taking the proofread and corrected digital files of the text — and soon, the graphics and covers — and using the templates provided by the design department to put the book into shape to be printed by Pathfinder. These comrades also produce a new index for each book and organize teams of volunteers to double check each book before it is sent to the shop for computer-to-plate printing.

4. We could also use more people who have scanners and knowledge of scanning, massaging, and OCR. We have found that the care with which the text is initially scanned and massaged has a huge impact on the subsequent phases of production, especially proofreading....

This perspective is challenging and exciting. The key to successfully carrying it out, however, is our ability to organize the scores of volunteers who want to enlist in this project, and be part of this international joint effort with Pathfinder's print shop.

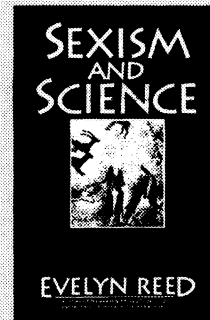
To volunteer or to re-volunteer, you can contact me at:
rcheney3@compuserve.com

Comradely,
Ruth Cheney,
Pathfinder Volunteer
Steering Committee Organizer

From Pathfinder

Sexism and Science

Evelyn Reed



Are human beings innately aggressive? Does biology condemn women to remain the "second sex"? Taking up these and other biases cloaked as the findings of science, Reed explains that the disciplines closest to human life—anthropology, biology, and sociology—are permeated with anti-woman rationalizations for the established capitalist order. \$15.95

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Edited by Mary-Alice Waters



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Leon Trotsky

This classic study of the Soviet workers state and its degeneration illuminates the roots of the social and political crisis shaking Russia and other former republics of the Soviet Union today. Also available in Russian and Spanish. \$19.95

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'Militant' sales to auto workers pick up

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Just before GM closed down most of its North American operations due to the two strikes in Flint, Michigan, supporters of the *Militant* in several cities took the socialist newsweekly to auto workers as they entered and left the plants during shift changes.

"We took 30 copies of the paper to the Mansfield GM Metal Fab plant this afternoon," reports Brad Downs in a June 22 note from Cleveland. "We started selling around 2 p.m. and sold our last copy around 3 p.m." Downs said many workers were angry that production was continuing at that plant while the Flint plants were struck.

The same day members of the United Auto Workers bought 17 copies of the *Militant* at the plant gate of the Ford Motor Co. in Hapeville, Georgia. Workers there told

Militant supporters they had taken up a collection for the GM strikers.

"We also sold eight copies of the paper at the UAW union hall in Doraville, Georgia," said Arlene Rubenstein, a member of the International Association of Machinists. "Some of the workers at the GM plant there were digging in for a long fight and some said they thought GM workers in Flint should settle the strike. You could easily see the polarization."

One Ford worker in New Jersey, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress Susan Annuth, campaigned with her supporters at the June 28 Puerto Rican Heritage Festival in Hoboken, New Jersey.

"We sold two subscriptions to the *Militant*, 15 copies of the socialist newsweekly and two copies of *Perspectiva Mundial*,"

said campaign supporter Luis Madrid.

One of the participants at the festival was a member of the teachers union in San Juan, Puerto Rico, who brought his daughter over to the campaign table. He said to her, "You'll want to check out these books." They bought *El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba* (Socialism and man in Cuba) by Ernesto Che Guevara and *Nueva Internacional* no. 1, which features the article "Opening Guns of World War III, Washington's Assault against Iraq."

Subscription renewal drive starts July 8

While continuing to reach out for new readers at plant gates and in working-class neighborhoods, supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* will also campaign to increase the long-term readership of the

socialist press through a four-week subscription renewal campaign starting July 8 and ending August 4. The local goals for the campaign will be printed in the next issue of the *Militant*.

One of the special things they will point to in asking subscribers to renew is the series of three interviews with generals of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba that has been featured in the *International Socialist Review*, published as a supplement to the *Militant*. (The first two, with Néstor López Cuba and Enrique Carreras, appeared in the June 22 and July 6 issues. The third, with José Ramón Fernández, will be published in next week's *Militant*.) Subscribers who renew for six months or longer can get any or all of the three interviews that they missed free from the *Militant*.

Active Workers Conference ❖ Pittsburgh, July 11-12

Main Presentations

Sea change in working-class politics

JACK BARNES

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY NATIONAL SECRETARY

- Exhaustion of bosses' ability to demoralize workers and hold off defensive action by the working class
- A crisis of the working-class vanguard is precipitated worldwide
- The growing political convergence of party branch and trade union fraction work
- Facing the party's retreat and retaking the living knowledge and practice of Marxism
- Producing books and pamphlets as a combined responsibility of branches, fractions, volunteers, and the apparatus — The 'turtle' fights back
- Preparing the party's national convention by strengthening our continuity: 60th anniversary of founding of SWP, 70th anniversary of the *Militant* and Pathfinder Press, and 80th anniversary of the communist movement in North America
- From Cuba to the U.S., communist vanguard regardless of size faces challenge of sharply changed situation: lessons from interviews with generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces and from the life of Manuel Piñero.

Discuss plans for year-end anniversary convention of the Socialist Workers Party in San Francisco

Structuring party branches and union fractions through mass work

A PANEL OF WORKER-BOLSHEVIKS

LESSONS OF COMMUNIST WORK FROM MCDONALD'S TO CASE CORP., FROM FLINT STRIKE TO THE PHILADELPHIA TRANSIT WORKERS WALKOUT, FROM DENMARK TO AUSTRALIA

NORTON SANDLER, PANEL MODERATOR

Member, International Association of Machinists; San Francisco

PANELISTS INCLUDE:

TOM ALTER Member, United Food and Commercial Workers; Des Moines, Iowa

DIANA NEWBERRY Organizer of SWP's work in the coalfields; Pittsburgh

ANNA OLSON Member, Transport Workers Union; Stockholm, Sweden

GAETAN WHISTON Member, United Steelworkers of America; Minneapolis

Puerto Rico: New rise of independence struggle as world imperialism weakens

VERÓNICA POSES

YOUNG SOCIALISTS NATIONAL COMMITTEE

- The uniqueness of the SWP's 60-year of record placing support for Puerto Rican independence at the center of strategy for the coming American socialist revolution
- Cuba's socialist revolution: class litmus test among pro-independence forces
- Imperialist decline opens door to resurgence of national liberation struggles from Ireland to Quebec
- Build the July 25 actions! Independence for Puerto Rico! Free the political prisoners!



Telephone workers on strike and others protest privatization of telephone company in San Juan, Puerto Rico, June 29, 1998.



Selling the *Militant* and Pathfinder books at gate of Century Aluminum in Ravenswood, West Virginia, April 25, 1998.

CONFERENCE DISPLAYS

Retaking Marxism:
Organizing branch socialist
summer schools

The reorganization of labor in the party
print shop and the international volunteer
brigade digitizing Pathfinder books

'The Revolution Betrayed' comes off
presses: the first joint product of
volunteers and the print shop

First reduction in the print shop's size and
department structure

Floor plan for installation of computer-to-
plate technology and photos of new
equipment

Plans for organizing volunteers to prepare
site for installation of new machinery

Puerto Rico,
the Socialist Workers Party,
and the fight for independence

CONFERENCE SITE

Marriott City Center

112 Washington Place, Pittsburgh, PA

FOR INFORMATION CALL:

Cleveland SWP (216) 861-6150 Pittsburgh SWP (412) 381-9785

YS National Committee
(773) 772-0551

Schedule

Saturday, July 11

- 8:00 – 11:00 a.m. Registration
- 11:00 – 12:00 p.m. Welcome reception / Lunch
- 12:00 – 2:30 p.m. Talk on Puerto Rico and discussion
- 3:00 – 5:30 p.m. Panel discussion (1st session)
- 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Dinner
- 7:30 – 11:30 p.m. Talk on Sea Change in Working-Class Politics and discussion

LAUNCHING OF CAPITAL FUND TO UPGRADE PRINTING EQUIPMENT

- 12:00 – 1:30 a.m. Party

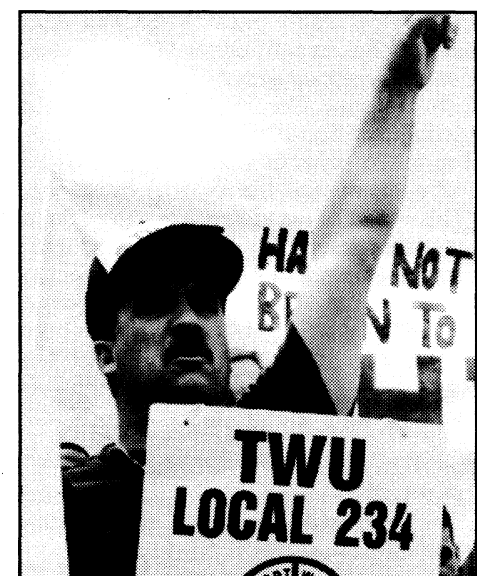
Sunday, July 12

- 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. Breakfast
- 9:00 – 11:30 a.m. Panel discussion (2nd session)
- 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. Summary of conference

- 4:30 p.m. – Meeting of the members of the SWP's national trade union fraction steering committees

Monday-Tuesday, July 13-14

Meeting of the SWP's National Committee



Rally by transit workers striking against SEPTA in Philadelphia, June 10, 1998.

HOSTS

Pittsburgh Socialist Workers Party,
Cleveland Socialist Workers Party,
Pittsburgh Young Socialists,
Young Socialists National Committee,
SWP National Trade Union
Fraction Steering Committees

200 protest KKK, racist killing in Texas

BY LAURA GARZA

JASPER, Texas — "Hey, hey, ho, ho, the KKK has got to go," was the chant that greeted the caravan of Ku Klux Klan members and their police escorts as they pulled up to the courthouse in downtown Jasper. The Klan rally on June 27 came in the wake of the brutal racist murder of James Byrd, Jr., just a few weeks ago. Byrd was beaten, chained by his ankles, and dragged behind the back of a pickup truck, dismembering his body along a three-mile route. Three white men have been charged in the killing.

While the Klan rally of about two dozen was ostensibly called to clarify their opposition to the murder, their spokespeople made clear that their real disagreement was with the outrage the killing has generated.

About 200 people, including dozens from out of town, came to the courthouse to protest the Klan. They did so in spite of an intense campaign to discourage any organized counterprotest to the racist rally. City and state officials, as well as leaders of traditional civil rights groups, told people to stay away and not respond to the KKK presence in the city. Jesse Jackson stated people

should "go fishing" instead. This succeeded in preventing any official action from being called. A handful of supporters of the Klan also showed up, many sporting Confederate flags, and clapping openly at the Klan speeches though they were mingled in with the crowd of antiracist protesters.

Tracey Lott, a 28-year-old resident of Jasper, joined several family members who came out. Echoing a sentiment expressed by many of the Black townspeople there she said, "I felt staying home would be like showing you're scared."

Billy Middleton, who came with several friends to "stand up against the Klan and show we're not afraid of them," also described the treatment many Blacks have received at the hands of local cops. Less than two years ago his brother and cousin were beaten by police; when they arrived at the hospital they were refused care.

The debate about racism that has opened up since the murder of Byrd was part of discussions among the crowd. Responding to the often-quoted statements by Jasper's sheriff, who is white, and its Black mayor that there is no racial problem in Jasper,



Militant/Barbara Graham

Chants of "Hey, hey, ho, ho, the KKK has got to go!" started up as the Klan arrived at the Jasper County courthouse June 27.

Bernadine Lewis Garland stated, "Racism is everywhere," and the city officials just didn't want to admit Jasper is like the rest of the country. "Where's the recreation," for Black youth in the town, Garland asked. "There's not one swimming pool." She and others in the crowd cited the lack of job op-

portunities, noting the small number of Blacks hired in front offices at the bank and the fact that while Blacks are hired as cooks, few Black waiters work in local restaurants.

The New Black Panthers of Dallas, led by former Nation of Islam official Khalid Muhammad, were the only organized forces that announced they would hold a counterprotest. They got massive media attention as they tried to physically confront the KKK, were turned away by cops, and then marched around the area, at one point with unloaded weapons. Most of the crowd, who came out to oppose the Klan, did not join in.

In many press accounts the Panthers were described as a "hate group," but many in the crowd who had come to protest the Klan took issue with this portrayal. Ethel Parks, of Jasper said she had one of them staying at her house and she thought the media was distorting their visit. "They believe in the right of Black people to defend themselves."

The NAACP held a statewide meeting June 27 in another part of town. A few dozen representatives from NAACP chapters attended along with some local residents. Rev. Raymond Scott of Beaumont, the area director of the NAACP, reported the chief of police said he didn't want the NAACP to hold a meeting in Jasper on that day. The meeting included an open discussion. People there described problems with job opportunities, racist treatment by local authorities, and a past unsolved killing of a Black youth, as well as projections for a memorial to James Byrd, Jr., and plans for following the trial of the accused killers.

Laura Garza is a member of International Association of Machinists Local 969 in Houston.

'Stop racist attacks,' say activists at Birmingham Labor Forum speakout

BY MEG NOVAK

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama — Nearly 30 people attended a speakout here June 26, against the racist murder of James Byrd, Jr., in Jasper, Texas. The crowd included workers, union activists, leaders of civil rights groups, antiracist youth, and others. The event was sponsored by the Militant Labor Forum.

"This is almost the year 2000, and the same kind of violence is happening today as happened in the 1940s, '50s and '60s," stated Norman Stover, who opened the panel of speakers. Stover is the vice-chair of the Northern Alabama Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and president of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 725.

Taji Brown, the president of the NAACP chapter at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, said that while doing research for his presentation, he had come across reports of two other racist dragging incidents in Texas since Byrd's death.

"It's a right of individuals to have their freedom and walk where they want to walk," Brown stated. He compared the lynching style death of Byrd to "a symbolic death of all the Black Americans who have died in the past. He symbolized what we thought was over."

Also speaking were Rev. Henry Sterling, the coordinator of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in Alabama; John Zippert, editor of the *Greene County Democrat* and co-chair of the Black Belt Defense Committee; and Kristin Meriam, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor of Alabama.

Zippert opened his remarks by saying, "This is part of the violence that goes on in the system every day. Hundreds and hundreds of children in Alabama are subject to

another form of violence. What about the foreclosure of small farms, or the burning of Black churches?"

Zippert explained the fight that is currently going on in Greene County, Alabama, to defend 12 voting rights activists who have been targeted by state and federal officials in an effort to intimidate Black voters.

"This act is an outrage, a deplorable and horrible act," stated Meriam, who is a member of the United Steelworkers of America. Meriam pointed to the upturn in strikes and other fights by working people as evidence of the possibility to mobilize opposition to the assault in Jasper.

"Who can stop racist attacks?" She continued. "The workers and students who are standing up to defend affirmative action, to defend bilingual education, protest police brutality, and fight for independence for Puerto Rico all help set a tone that racist murder will not be tolerated.... These people, the fighting workers, farmers and young people, are capable of creating a better society in the new century."

U.S. court rules to deport Basque political refugee

BY JANET POST

MIAMI — On June 17, U.S. Federal District judge Ted Bandstra ruled that Ramon Aldasoro Magunacelaya should be extradited to Spain. Defense attorneys are considering an appeal.

Aldasoro is the first pro-independence Basque political refugee to be arrested in the United States. He had been a Toyota salesman in Homestead, Florida, for a year and a half, until his arrest on Dec. 1, 1997. The FBI's joint terrorism task force carried out the arrest that was coordinated between the Spanish police agency Interpol and the U.S. State Department. The 40-year-old Aldasoro is imprisoned at Miami's Federal Detention Center.

He has been framed up by Spanish authorities for allegedly aiding in the killing of a retired Spanish air force general and two cops in a mortar attack on a civil guards' barracks in 1988. Madrid claims that he is a member of the ETA (Basque Homeland and Liberty), which fights for the independence of the Basque country from Spain. At the May 28 extradition hearing of Aldasoro the political question of independence for the Basque country came to the fore.

The Basque people are an oppressed nation of about 3 million people in northern Spain and southern France. About 25 percent of the people in the Basque country, or Euskal Herria, speak Basque, although it is not recognized as an official language by either the French or Spanish governments. The unemployment rate is 21 percent. In a 1978 plebiscite the majority of the Basque people voted against the Spanish constitution, which rejected self-determination for Euskal Herria. The pro-independence political party Herri Batasuna (Popular Unity) is the third-largest in the Basque country. Demonstrations have recently been held in the Basque village of Otxandio in support of Aldasoro.

At the hearing defense attorney Fletcher Peacock explained that all of the Basque "witnesses" who initially implicated Aldasoro did so under torture and have recanted their testimony regardless of likely repercussions. All of these witnesses are in prison in Spain.

Witness and ETA member Juan Carlos Arruti Azpitarte recanted his testimony on Sept. 21, 1989 — one day after it was given. Peacock said that when Arruti refused to sign a statement against Aldasoro he was taken to "the hills" — the civil guard barracks — beaten in the head, tortured with electrodes, and had a plastic bag placed over his head to cause near-suffocation.

In her recantation Miren Pilare López de Luzuriaga said that her original statement and misidentification of Aldasoro in a lineup

was after five days in isolation with no light, and beatings. In one torture session she was forced to listen to her husband's screams as he was hung out of a window by guardsmen who threatened to drop him.

ETA member Viguri Camino was interrogated while blindfolded, handcuffed, and shackled on the trip to the court in Madrid and had no legal representation during the interrogation.

Of these recantations the prosecution said, "Claiming they were tortured is a 'method' used by the ETA," and that the recantations are "alleged" since they are not notarized. But prisoners in Spain are not allowed to come out and give a notarized statement, Peacock said.

Also in the hearing, the prosecution and defense debated whether cases of Basque pro-independence fighters would fall under the "political offense exemption" clause of the 1970 extradition treaty between Spain and the United States.

The only witness to testify at the hearing was defense witness Edgardo Rotman, a professor at the University of Miami Law School. Rotman said that the struggle for self-determination in the Basque country was a legitimate ongoing political struggle and that acts carried out as part of that struggle, whether armed or not, should be considered as exemptions from extradition.

Janet Post is a member of International Association of Machinists Local 368. Rollande Girard contributed to this article.

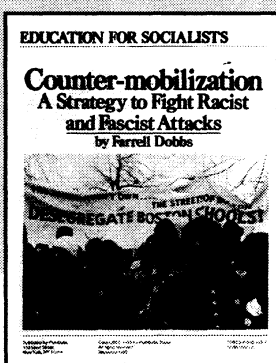
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Farrell Dobbs

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Communist candidate in the race for mayor in Montreal

The article below appeared in the June 21 issue of *La Presse*, a French-language daily published in Montreal, under the headline, "A communist in the race for mayor of Montreal." Translation is by the *Militant*.

BY ÉRIC TROTTIER

A leader of the Communist League in Canada, Michel Dugré has joined the race for mayor of Montreal promising to form the first "workers and farmers government."

A presser, member of the Clothing Union, Michel Dugré, 50 years old, launched his campaign yesterday by promising a handful of voters "a worker's response to the social problems which are affecting Montreal."

If he is ever elected mayor November 1, Dugré promises to reduce the work week of municipal employees to 30 hours a week "without loss of wages" in order to make room for unemployed youth.

More than anything, he wants the next

mayor of Montreal "to build solidarity" with the workers and oppressed. The socialist mayoral candidate began his "precampaign" last week by visiting the locked out employees of the Casino and the paper workers on strike in the regions of... Trois Rivières and Shawinigan.

Michel Dugré supports all the good causes beginning with the nurses. "We want to reestablish social programs," he says, "and improve the road network with new infrastructure programs..."

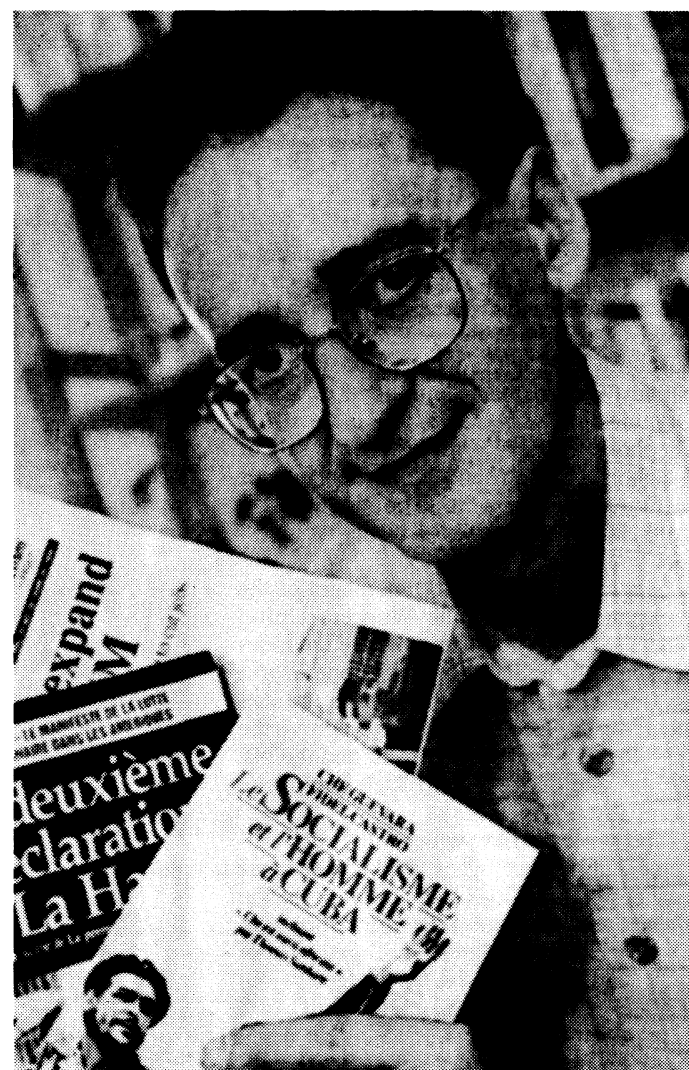
When it is pointed out to him that a mayor, even if he heads a great metropolis, has more often than not a modest role, consisting in cleaning the streets, parks and alleys, he replies, "We are in a crisis of the capitalist economy. The problems of Montreal are without question Montreal problems, but the solutions are far from being Montreal solutions."

He wants to reduce the hours of work, increase services for the citizens... Where will he get the money?

"Money isn't a problem," Dugré assures us. "There are huge amounts of money but they are used to serve the interests of the big companies. A government must decide if the capitalists or the workers must pay..."

As we suspected, the socialist candidate has tried without success to win elections in the past. In the June 2, 1997, federal elections, he got 469 votes in the riding of Papineau-St. Denis (won by Pierre Pettigrew); in 1993, in the provincial elections not less than 130 voters expressed their confidence in him in the riding of Laurier-Sainte Marie; finally in the municipal elections of 1990, he won a moral victory: 1 percent of the vote for mayor with 1,762 votes...

Left: photo of Michel Dugré, Communist League candidate for mayor of Montreal, as run in *La Presse* together with this news article.



Militant/Bob Braxton
After Pathfinder Bookstore's grand opening in Atlanta, supporters took the revolutionary books and pamphlets to the Puerto Rican San Juan Festival there June 21.

Pathfinder shop opens at new site in Atlanta

BY DAN FEIN

ATLANTA — Thirty people attended the June 20 grand opening of the Pathfinder Bookstore at its new location at 230 Auburn Ave. in Atlanta. Auburn Avenue is the center of the historic Black business district of Atlanta on the east end of downtown, and a few blocks from Georgia State University.

The facility also serves as the campaign headquarters of the 1998 Socialist Workers Election Campaign. An attractive display in the window promotes James Harris for governor, Dan Fein for U.S. Senate, Arlene Rubinstein for U.S. Congress, 4th C.D., and Paul Cornish for U.S. Congress, 5th C.D.

Eddie Slaughter, a Black farmer from southern Georgia, began the event by explaining a lawsuit filed against the racist policies of the U.S. government toward Black farmers. Slaughter told the audience, "The fight is not simply Black farmers versus the U.S. government, but family farms versus corporate big-business farming. And the problem is not just in the U.S. It's the struggle of the poor versus the rich throughout the world." He announced that Black farmers and their supporters will be pressing their fight at the national convention of the NAACP, to be held in Atlanta July 11-15.

Tom Leonard, a longtime leader of the Socialist Workers Party from Houston, spoke on "Southern labor and working-class politics — part of a changing world." He addressed the increased resistance of working people, demonstrated in the strikes of auto workers against General Motors and other labor battles. He zeroed in on the Tow Boat Pilot's strike and the lockout of Crown oil refinery workers in Houston as examples of the greater opportunities for socialist workers to participate in struggles with other fighting workers today. "This increased resistance by workers makes them thirsty for the kind of books being sold in this bookstore," Leonard said.

The next day 21 people returned to hear a class by Leonard on "Imperialism and its wars — some lessons from World War II" and a class by Jerry Freiwirth on "The general strike in Denmark — an eyewitness report." Freiwirth is a member of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union in Houston and a member of the Socialist Workers Party.

Following the classes, the socialist candidates and a few supporters attended the San Juan Festival, where Puerto Ricans and others gathered for music, dance and food. The campaigners sold 12 *Militants*, two copies of *Perspectiva Mundial*, three copies of the pamphlet, *Puerto Rico: U.S. Colony in the Caribbean*, and handed out hundreds of leaflets advertising the following week's Militant Labor Forum on the Puerto Rican independence struggle.

Dan Fein is a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1996.

Socialist in Manchester wins support in job fight

PAUL GALLOWAY
AND ANNE HOWIE

MANCHESTER, England — Paul Davies, who is fighting a political sacking from the Electrium electrical engineering factory here, was fired a second time June 5. Davies had been working a temporary contract at P.I. Castings, a foundry, for a week when he was called into the office and told he was fired, not because there was anything wrong with his work, but because his previous employer had given him a bad reference.

Davies was sacked by Electrium April 3 and escorted off the premises. While the company claimed there was no work for him but he would get a good reference, Davies maintains that he was fired because of his trade union and political activity. Many of his workmates agree. Since that time Davies and his workmates have waged a campaign for his reinstatement.

Fact sheets detailing the company's attack have circulated widely in the factory, and 88 workers so far have signed a petition calling on Electrium to reinstate Davies. One worker cut out an article about Davies' fight that was run in the *Militant*, put it in a plastic sleeve, and passed it round the factory for others to read.

Davies is known among many of the 500 workers at the plant for his view that working people throughout the world need strong, effective unions. He is a member of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Workers Union and of the Communist League. The fact sheet explains, "He engages in civil discussion with his workmates about a programme to strengthen the labour movement: against temporary contracts which pit worker against worker; for a shorter working week which can unite employed and unemployed.... Paul is well known for his activity in campaigning to get the British troops out of Ireland. [He] has introduced a number of workmates to political papers, books, and pamphlets."

After the June 5 sacking, Davies said,

"this latest move is an escalation of the attack, since it amounts to blacklisting. It certainly proves that Electrium got rid of me for political reasons. And it shows how bosses act together, as a class, against workers."

On hearing about the latest sacking, many workers at Electrium were angry. "That's blacklisting!" said one. "It was wrong the first time," said another, "but this is well out of order." Now supporters of Paul Davies have produced a new fact sheet reporting the recent sacking, and distributed it at the plant gate. One worker has put a copy up inside the factory.

Prior to the latest development, a May 28 Militant Labour Forum titled, "Fight the political sacking of Paul Davies," was addressed by Davies. The meeting also heard a report on the strike by care workers from elderly people's homes in Tameside, Greater Manchester by Joan Ashton, one of the strikers.

An Electrium worker at the meeting explained some of the background in the factory prior to the sacking and subsequent reinstatement fight. The worker, who asked that her name not be reported, said, "One of the reasons that there is so much support is that this is a factory where the management have been trying to make a lot of changes. A lot of people like what is on the fact sheet because it is having a go at the company and that is what they want to do."

She described some of the skirmishes that have happened over the last few years - some of which workers won, others they didn't. Workers walked out over the heat in the factory in 1995; circulated a petition to force the company to recognize a new union convenor they elected, and in 1996 held a series of unsuccessful one-day strikes demanding shop floor workers, most of whom are women, get sick pay, as the men in the tool room do.

In the wake of these strikes, she said, the company started to employ a lot of workers on temporary contract "to undermine work-

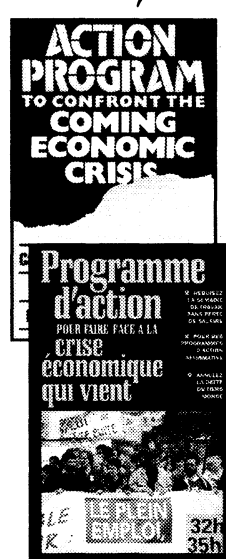
ing conditions of all workers. The temps are put under pressure, and live in fear of not getting their contract renewed...."

"But not all the temps keep their head down." She said the first signature on the petition for reinstatement was by a worker on a temporary contract. Another temp has been passing round the fact sheet.

Davies' trade union branch has passed a resolution of support for the reinstatement fight. In addition to campaigning at the factory gate, Davies has decided to submit a claim of unfair dismissal to an industrial tribunal.

While generally a worker must be employed for two years before having the right to go to an industrial tribunal, in the case of discrimination, on the grounds of sex, race, or previous trade union activity there is no time restriction.

From Pathfinder



An Action Program to Confront the Coming Economic Crisis

A Program for International Working-Class Struggle Today

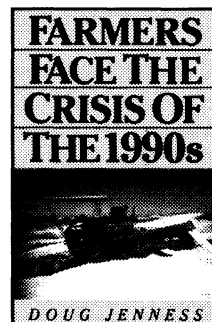
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Unionists in Puerto Rico prepare nation-

Continued from front page

June 7 and 8.

Three thousand delegates representing a coalition of trade unions met in the San Juan suburb of Carolina June 28 and approved a proposal to launch the general strike. The purpose of the nationwide work stoppage, called by the Broad Committee of Labor Organizations (CAOS), is to join the 6,400 telephone workers in protesting the sale of the phone company and to oppose the plans by Gov. Pedro Rosselló to continue selling state-owned enterprises to capitalist investors.

The strike by the 4,400 members of the Independent Telephone Workers Union (UIET) and the 2,000 members of the Independent Brotherhood of Telephone Workers (HIETEL), began June 18 after the senate in this U.S. colony voted to approve the sale. Rosselló subsequently signed the bill for the sale of the Puerto Rico Telephone Company (PRTC).

The general strike, which will mostly involve public employees, will affect basic services and facilities such as the ports, the electric company, public transportation, and water and sewage plants. Teachers, most of whom are on summer break, pledged to join the picket lines. The 53 unions in CAOS have 150,000 members.

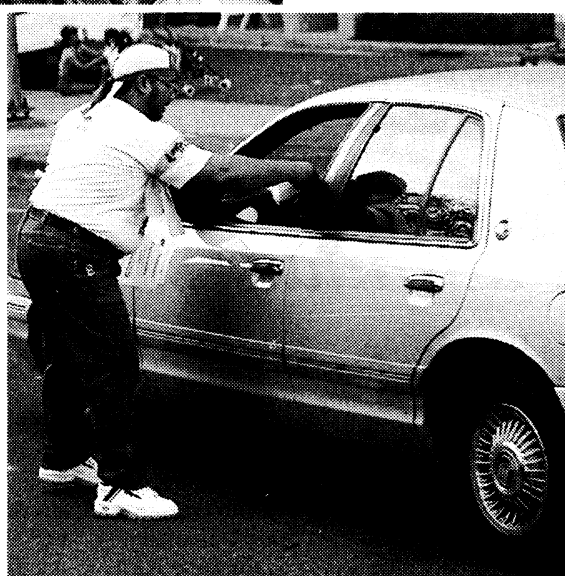
'Not just a phone workers strike'

"This is not just a telephone workers strike — it's a strike of the people," said Teresa Concepción, 35, echoing a comment made by a number of workers interviewed by the *Militant*, both on the picket lines and in the street.

Concepción has been traveling more than an hour every day from the town of San Lorenzo to join the picket line at the telephone company's main office at 1500 Roosevelt Avenue. "I'm not a phone worker," she said. "I used to work at the Gibraltar military clothing factory, but



Militant photos: Martín Koppel
Above, PRTC strikers and supporters demonstrate June 30 against sell-off of state-owned company. At right, telephone strikers pass out information about the strike and win contributions from drivers by. Unionists have broad support from other workers who see strike as a fight for Puerto Rican national pride.



they're shutting down the plant and I just got laid off." She was accompanied by her co-worker Lidia Quiñones, 35, who had also gotten her layoff notice.

Next to them was Ivette Rivera, 58, a secretary whose two grandchildren work at the telephone company. "I'm here for them," she declared. "I get off work at 3:00 p.m. and it sometimes takes me almost an hour to get here. And let me tell you, I'm happy! I wish the general strike had already begun."

Contingents of workers from other unions join the picket lines ev-

ery day, particularly from the electrical workers, water workers, teachers, and health workers unions.

It's hard to go far in San Juan, Puerto Rico's capital, and not run into a picket line. The two biggest concentrations of pickets — with numbers ranging from a few dozen to the hundreds — gather at the main headquarters and at Plaza Celulares Telefónica, the facility for beepers and cellular phones. There are 150 picket lines around the island.

Working people have contributed tens of thousands of dollars to support the strikers. "Here at Roosevelt Avenue, in a week we've collected \$25,000 in cash contributions," reported Norma Coriano Báez, 33, who works repairing phones at the facility in the suburb of Bayamón. "A lot of people bring us bread, drinks, fruit, and sandwiches."

Workers and students have held dozens of solidarity rallies around the island. UTIER, the electrical workers union, held a three-day walkout in support of the phone workers June 23-25. The water workers union UIA staged a one-day strike. On June 24, the UIA picketed the central offices of the water authority with demands about their own contract and then marched to Plaza Celulares Telefónica; 4,000 people, including taxi drivers with their vehicles, took part in the noon rally there.

The same day, the Teamsters and Port Authority workers shut down the Isla Grande complex, which includes the commuter airport, docks, and government offices.

In Mayagüez, on the western tip of the island, 500 people picketed the PRTC offices.

On June 27, after big-business commentators warned that the picket lines were supposedly too dangerous for women, the Puerto Rican Organization of Working Women and Committee of Women Against Privatization organized a march of 1,000 women supporters of the strike, some of whom carried a giant Puerto Rican flag. Among the marchers was Lolita Lebrón, one of the five Nationalist heroes who spent a quarter century as political prisoners in U.S. jails for their pro-independence activities.

Students join picket lines

The telephone workers' picket lines have been a pole of attraction for hundreds of high school and university students. Gazer Sued, a student at the University of Puerto Rico and members of the Student Front, explained that students have been on the picket lines on a daily basis from the beginning of the strike.

At the June 30 rally, which drew about 500 people, Nelson Díaz, 16, whose father is a striker, waved a sign with Rosselló's picture and the words "Judas Iscariot" below. "If Puerto Rico was independent, we would be the owners of our country and GTE couldn't just come and buy the telephone company against the will of the people," Díaz said. He added that he is pro-independence but his father is not.

Rosselló, of the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP), pushed through the sale of the telephone company. This effort began however, in 1990 under the previous

Activists use Puerto Rican day events, telephone strike to build July 25 actions

BY JACK WILLEY

CHICAGO — Many people lining the route of the June 28 Puerto Rican Parade in Camden, New Jersey, cheered and clapped for a float building the July 25 national march on Washington, called "to denounce the Centennial of the U.S. invasion and colonization of our nation, Puerto Rico, to reaffirm our right as a nation to a true process of self-determination, [and] to demand the release of the Puerto Rican political prisoners and prisoners of war."

Surrounding the float of prison bars around the large pictures of Puerto Rican political prisoners, supporters handed out posters and leaflets about the march to the crowd.

"People went crazy, joining in with chants of '¡Viva la huelga!' [Long live the strike] and '¡Viva Puerto Rico Libre!' [Long live free Puerto Rico]" said Luis Sanabria of the Philadelphia chapter of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners, describing the response at the parade. "At the judging area [for the floats], we told everyone about the march on Washington and called on the officials and other bystanders to join us in singing Puerto Rico's national anthem. Everyone joined in," he said.

The march on Washington was initiated by the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners, which has chapters in several U.S. cities. The national march will be preceded by a 24-hour vigil beginning at noon July 24.

The July 25 demonstration in Washington coincides with other actions the same day on similar themes. This includes a march in New York from Columbus Circle to the United Nations, sponsored by the Comité Puerto Rico '98. An action will take place at the UN Plaza in San Francisco. And in Guánica, Puerto Rico, the Congreso Nacional Hostosiano and the Puerto Rican Independence Party are sponsoring a march

and rally.

Some 60 people attended a cultural and fund-raising event at Philadelphia's Painted Bridge Art Center, June 26. The event, titled "Cuba and Puerto Rico are Two Wings of the Same Bird: 100 Years of Struggle Against Colonialism and Imperialism," was co-sponsored by the National Committee and the Cuba Support Coalition. The program included a Puerto Rican band and Latin Wave, a Puerto Rican dance group. Speakers from the two organizations urged people attending to go to the national march in Washington.

The Philadelphia group is holding a public meeting June 30 to discuss building the action in the U.S. capital.

In Minneapolis and St. Paul, activists held a successful fund-raising dinner for the march at Todos los Santos church, June 27. Some 45 people attended the event, which raised more than \$300 to help cover travel expenses for the trip.

In Boston the National Committee has called a public planning meeting for July 2. In addition to Boston, organizers report buses are being organized from Worcester, Amherst, and Springfield in Massachusetts, as well as Hartford, Connecticut. On July 11 there will be an event at the Community Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to inform people of the march and get out the word about buses.

Members of Latinos for Social Change, which is building the march to the United Nations July 25, the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners, and others joined a picket line on June 25 in downtown Boston in solidarity with the telephone workers on strike in Puerto Rico.

Comité Puerto Rico '98 is building the United Nations action in New York through picket lines in solidarity with the telephone strikers June 2, 7, and 8 outside Banco Popular, which is involved in the sale. In addition, they are holding a fund-raising dance

at Casa de las Américas the evening of June 3.

For more information about the national march on Washington, write to Afiración Boricua '98, P.O. Box 76360, Washington, D.C. 20013, e-mail at Jornada98@aol.com or see the web site at www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/6098 or call 773-278-0885.

For more information about the rally at the United Nations, check out the web site at www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Congress/1481 or call 888-509-2103.

For more information about the action in San Francisco, call 800-431-4818, ext. 126. Outside California, call 510-893-3131, ext. 126.

Margrethe Siem in Boston, Heather Wood in Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Peter Siedman in Philadelphia contributed to this article.

U.S. workers, youth stage support actions for Puerto Rican telephone strikers

BY ELENA TATE

BOSTON — Twenty-five people rallied in front of the Government of Puerto Rico office in downtown Boston June 25 to show solidarity with telephone workers who are on strike against the privatization of the national phone company on the island. Some of the most popular chants, in English and Spanish, were "Stop Police Brutality Against Telephone Workers!" and "Puerto Rico No Se Vende [Puerto Rico is not for sale]."

Leaflets were passed out to passersby with information about the July 25 marches, in Washington, D.C., and New York, that will demand self-determination for Puerto Rico and freedom for the Puerto Rican political prisoners. Many had not heard anything about the strike. One college student bought a copy of the *Militant* newspaper because it contained

coverage of the work stoppage.

Actions in solidarity with the Puerto Rican phone workers are taking place in other U.S. cities as well. One hundred people rallied in New York June 24. Other actions are planned.

The Philadelphia chapter of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners along with other activists building the July 25 march on Washington have called a July 7 picket line outside the local offices of the Puerto Rican government to coincide with the general strike set for the island. The picket will begin at 10 a.m. at 2 Penn Center (15th Street and JFK Blvd.). For more information, call 215-427-0592.

Peter Seidman in Philadelphia contributed to this article.

wide solidarity strike

administration of Gov. Rafael Hernández Colón, whose Popular Democratic Party (PPD) favors the colonial "commonwealth" status quo. In an interview, UIET general secretary José Acosta noted that Hernández Colón backed off his privatization plan at the time, partly due to resistance by the unions.

A consortium that is headed by the U.S. communications giant GTE and includes the local Banco Popular is buying just over 50 percent of the shares in the company. Three percent of the shares would be given to employees, who would have the option to buy an additional 3 percent. The remaining 44 percent would remain in the hands of the government for now, although Rosselló has said he would like to sell it off too.

The government has already sold some hospitals, hotels, the major shipping company, a pineapple farm and processing plant, and some prisons. The electrical company, water authority, and other services may be next on the chopping block.

'Fighting to defend national patrimony'

"Yes, it's true that I and others would probably be laid off if the phone company is privatized. But the main reason we're on strike is to defend our national patrimony," said Cecilia Ortiz, a HIETEL union member with 18 years' service. This comment was almost universal among strikers interviewed by the *Militant*.

"This is one of the country's most profitable assets, and the income from it shouldn't go to the United States or Spain; it should stay here," she remarked. "It belongs to us."

Ortiz pointed to a slogan pasted on a wall that said, "What do we want 3 percent for, if we are the owners of 100 percent?" referring to the 3 percent stock option offered company employees.

The government argues for the privatization, saying that the government should not run businesses, that the PRTC needs "flexibility" to compete in the world market, and that the income resulting from the sale is needed to help subsidize a number of government projects, from the water authority to the colonial government's retirement plan, which Acosta said has a deficit of \$5 billion.

In an interview, HIETEL president Annie Cruz emphasized that the sale of the PRTC would lead to rate increases. She also noted that Rosselló had refused to talk to union officials. The phone workers unions, Cruz said, were suggesting that if the government refused to reverse the sale of the phone company, it should at least organize a referendum on the question.

Several workers said indignantly that the sale was a giveaway to GTE. Of the \$1.875 billion price tag, GTE will pay only \$375 million in cash and the rest will be financed with a loan from Citibank.

Some strikers point out that when the phone company was privately owned before — by ITT — the service wasn't better; it was notoriously worse, which in fact forced the Puerto Rico government to purchase the company for \$165 million in 1974.

Cecilia Ortiz recalled that at that time, "many Puerto Ricans, including my family, which lives in the countryside, still had no telephone service at all" — a telling sign of Puerto Rico's colonial status. Since then, that has changed, but today there are higher expectations about acceptable living standards and a growing refusal to accept cutbacks in those living conditions.

Government propaganda campaign

The convergence of labor resistance and national pride around the telephone workers strike, whose banner and symbol is the

Puerto Rican flag, has made this a deeply popular struggle. The Rosselló government, surprised by the widespread response, has been working overtime to undercut this support through a crude campaign of violence-baiting and intimidation. The daily papers regularly run front-page headlines about alleged sabotage of phone lines, in a clear effort to blame the strikers. No charges have been filed against any strikers for sabotage.

The colonial House of Representatives ran a full-page ad in the local newspapers with text of a resolution it had adopted June 29. The heading read "Enough! The telephone strike is just an excuse by a small group of agitators and political extremists who seek to impose themselves through violence, threats, and sabotage. Puerto Rico must not tolerate nor yield in face of this..."

Police superintendent Pedro Toledo has led the charge in this public campaign, branding students and university professors as "outside agitators" and a "small group of leftists," who he has blamed for violence. A June 30 headline in the *San Juan Star*, for example, read "Toledo says PRTC strike

may become a 'revolution.'" The police chief has singled out two professors, Rafael Bernabe, president of the Puerto Rican Association of University Professors, and Julio Muriente, who is the head of the New Puerto Rican Independence Movement (NMIP), in a not-so-subtle threat to arrest them.

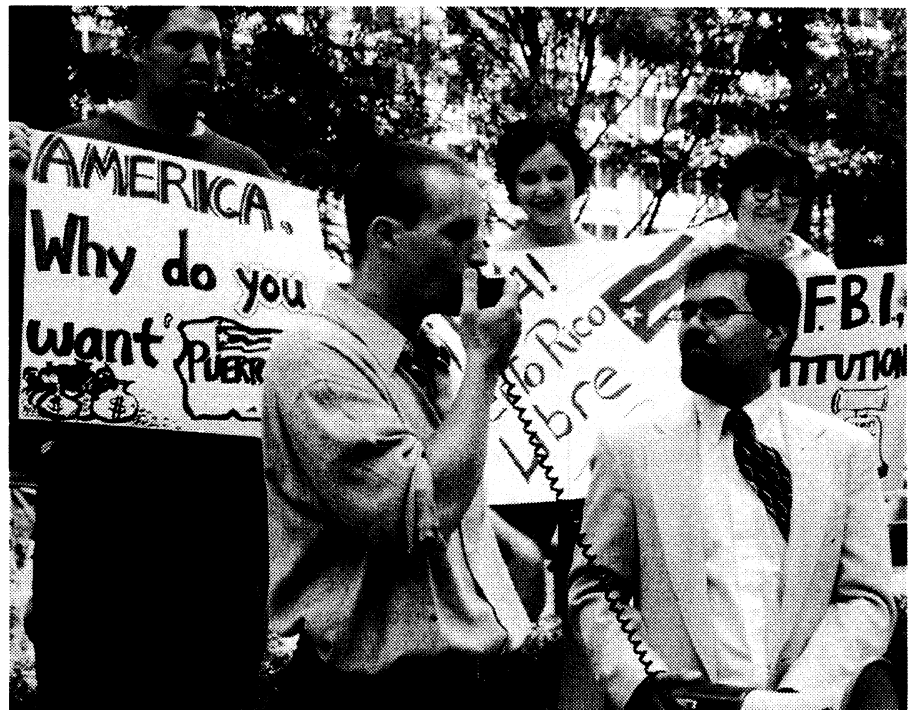
The students and university professors "have the right to picket and help," said Nivia Rivera, a striking member of UIET, because "this is a strike of the people. Everyone has the right to be here" on the picket lines.

Strikers pointed to the police and their brutal methods as the true source of violence on the picket lines. Police attacks on the pickets left 15 people injured in the first days of the strike. The cops were attacking unionists for trying to block supervisory personnel from entering the PRTC facilities. Toledo has begun floating warnings about bringing in the National Guard against "anarchy and extreme violence."

Rulers debate course

Other strikers said the government's campaign around "subversives" had limited credibility because of previous exposures of efforts by the FBI and local political police to disrupt the labor and independence

Chicago activists protest frame-up



Militant/Elizabeth Stone

Marcos Vilar (speaking) and Mervin Mendez (right) condemn frame-up of José Solís at June 25 press conference prior to hearing for the Puerto Rican activist.

BY JOSHUA CARROLL AND JACK WILLEY

CHICAGO — Some 30 people attended a meeting at the New World Resource Center here June 28 to hear José Solís Jordán. The Puerto Rican independence activist is being framed up by the U.S. government for a 1992 bombing of a military recruitment facility in Chicago.

This case, he explained, "is about showing the Puerto Rican people what happens to you if you challenge the U.S. government in Puerto Rico." Solís went on, "Even if I go to jail, it is not a victory for [the colonial rulers]. They only win the battle when you fall down on your knees and give in."

In addition to discussing his case, Solís pointed to the strike against the privatization of the Puerto Rican telephone company. "It's the people's strike," he said. "The telephone company is national patrimony — it's ours."

Solís urged those present to build the

July 25 march in Washington D.C.

This meeting took place the weekend after a June 25-26 pre-trial court hearing for Solís's case. The hearing took up a motion filed by Solís's attorney to suppress evidence that the FBI acquired during their interrogation of Solís. Both Solís and Rafael Anglada López, a prominent lawyer who handles cases involving independence activists in Puerto Rico, testified that Solís was denied legal council during the interrogation. The judge ruled against the motion.

Some 25 supporters of Solís attended a press conference preceding the hearing. The press conference and meeting were both sponsored by the Committee in Solidarity with José Solís Jordán. For more information about the committee, contact Mervin Mendez at 773-278-9361. To make a donation to the José Solís Jordán Defense Fund, c/o the Law Offices of Jed Stone, 434 W. Ontario, Suite 400, Chicago, IL 60610.

movements over the past two decades.

In face of this resistance, the controversy over the telephone company sale has created a crisis and deepened divisions in the big-business political parties in the island, the PNP and PPD. Some leaders of the PPD — which has waffled over the issue — have publicly pleaded for the party to take a position in favor of the strike and to maintain a presence at the picket lines, in hopes that the strike's popularity will rub off on them and give them an edge over the ruling pro-statehood party. A few dissident voices have even been heard in the PNP.

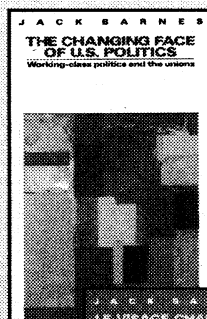
The Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) has expressed support for the tele-

phone workers strike by appealing to the government for "dialogue" with the unions.

Meanwhile, organizations fighting for the release of *independentista* political prisoners and against the U.S. military's massive presence in Puerto Rico announced that the July 4 demonstration they had planned near the Roosevelt Roads military base in eastern Puerto Rico was changed to San Juan. The march will begin at Fort Buchanan — where the U.S. Southern Command, previously in Panama, is being transferred to — and will end up at the telephone workers picket lines.

Ron Richards contributed to this article.

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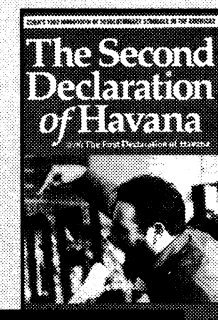
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Talks break off in Philadelphia transit workers strike

BY NANCY COLE

PHILADELPHIA — After nine straight days of negotiations, Transport Workers Union Local 234 broke off talks on the 30th day of the strike that has shut down the city bus, trolley, and subway lines run by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA).

Local 234 president Steve Brookens charged that SEPTA negotiators and Democratic mayor Edward Rendell had only promised to drop five major antilabor demands to head off the union's threatened picketing of Democratic Party officials, who are scouting a site for the next national convention. "We found out today all they did was lie," Brookens told hundreds of strikers who rallied outside their union offices for most of the day June 30 awaiting word on negotiations.

Strikers then marched more than 20 blocks to Independence Mall in Center City, where the first activity for the Democratic Party site committee was scheduled. After the Democratic officials confirmed the TWU would picket the planned three days of wining and dining, they opted to pack up and leave the city. At a hastily called news conference with Mayor Rendell, reported the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, site committee vice-chair Lawrence J. Gorski said one of the reasons the Democrats decided to leave the city was to not take, or appear to take, a position on the labor dispute.

Strikers rallied briefly at Independence Mall and then marched back to the union offices. "If we don't settle by July 4, I think SEPTA will stop negotiating and try and

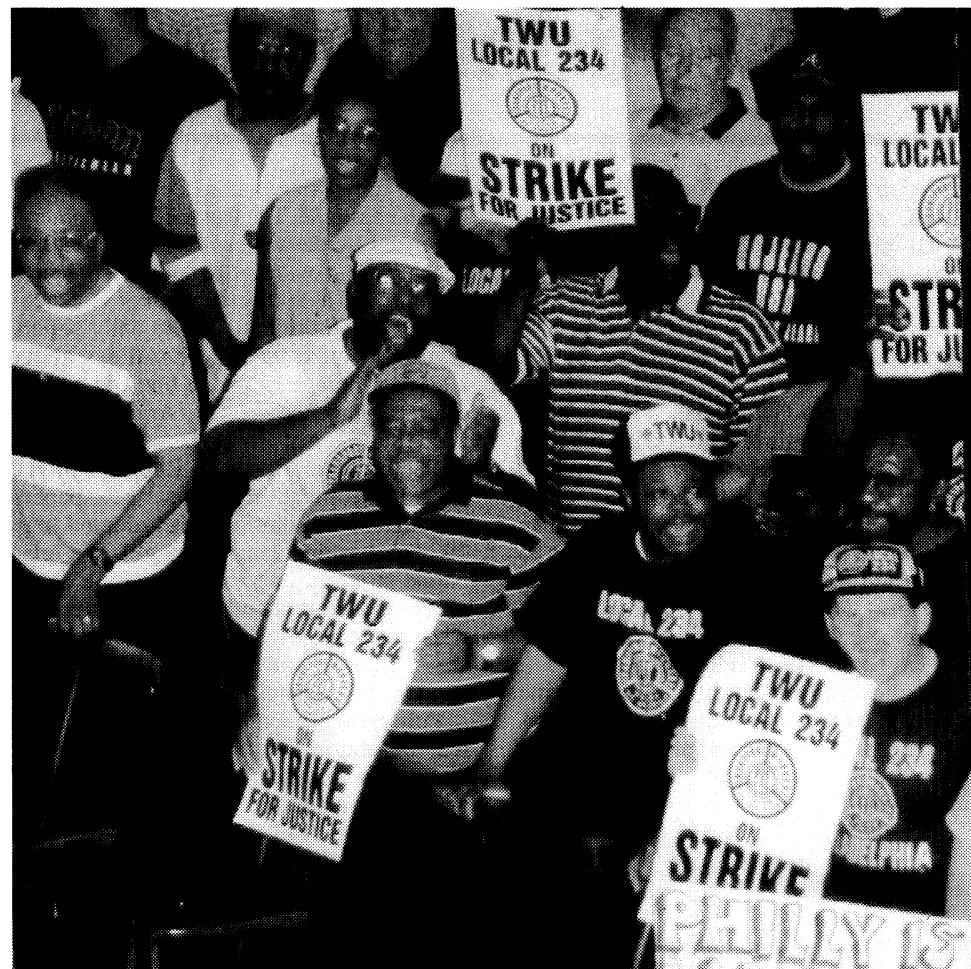
starve us out by waiting till September," George Daniel, a mechanic with four years at SEPTA, told the *Militant*. "But we can hold out. It won't break us."

The major issues in negotiations are the introduction of part-time workers, contracting out maintenance work, workers compensation takebacks, a sweeping "management rights" clause, and changes in disciplinary procedures that would make it easier to fire workers.

"We're fighting for the future of our union," explained Thomas Fishburn, a bus driver for eight years. "We're fighting against privatization; we're fighting so that we won't be fired for whatever reason." Fishburn told the *Militant* that for SEPTA workers with little seniority like himself, conditions already in effect mean up to a 14-hour day for 8 hours' pay because of the 4- or 5-hour break between morning and afternoon peak traveling times.

At the bus depot on 19th Street and Oregon in South Philadelphia June 30, six of seven pickets told stories of serious injuries they had suffered while working, underscoring the importance of fighting SEPTA's takeback demands around workers' compensation.

"SEPTA does not listen to our complaints about lack of safety," said Bill Williams, a bus driver with 32 years on the job, who was off work for six months with a torn Achilles tendon. "They bought new buses that have several features that make them unsafe." Strikers report that no action has been taken on safety committee recommendations dating from 1993.



Militant/Pete Seidman

Striking members of Transit Workers Union rally at Philadelphia City Hall June 19

A rally at Independence Mall in solidarity with the strike attracted 1,000 strikers and supporters June 27. A large contingent of transit workers from New York City joined the protest, marching into the rally behind a huge TWU Local 100 of Greater New York banner. "We're here to support Local 234," bus driver Lee Williams said. "We feel that what's happening to them could happen to us."

A bus load of members of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees in Atlantic City, New Jersey, were among the

other unionists in attendance.

The rally was also in support of 12 members of International Union of Operating Engineers Local 716, toll collectors for the Delaware River Port Authority. The "dirty dozen," as they call themselves, were fired following a march across the Ben Franklin bridge May 16 after which they and about 60 others were arrested. That action had protested replacement of full-time union toll collectors with part-time workers.

After beating back an attempt by the Port Authority to block them, the fired toll takers led another march of 100 across the Ben Franklin bridge following the rally. At the June 30 rally following the breakdown in negotiations, Local 234 president Brookens called on strikers to join a protest the next day called by court workers, organized by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees District Council 47.

Nancy Cole is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in Philadelphia's First District and a member of the International Association of Machinists. Candace Wagner, a member of the United Auto Workers, and John Staggs, a member of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union contributed to this article.

N.Y. cop convicted in death of Anthony Baez

BY PACO SÁNCHEZ

BRONX, New York — The New York cop accused of choking Anthony Baez to death in the early morning hours of Dec. 22, 1994, was convicted in Federal court of violating Baez's civil rights. Free on bond and facing up to 10 years in jail, Francis Livoti is to be sentenced September 24.

Livoti's previous acquittal on charges of criminally negligent homicide in a state trial in the Bronx in 1996 had outraged working people in New York and triggered many demonstrations demanding justice. Baez, 29, and his brother David, now 21, were playing in front of their house when a football hit Livoti's police car. David Baez was arrested during the confrontation after Livoti ordered the brothers to stop the game.

Opening a "town hall" meeting against police brutality June 29, Iris Baez, Anthony's mother and a leader of the struggle against police brutality in the city,

explained when she and her family were told at their home in Florida that Anthony had died of asthma, "we knew the police were lying." The Baez's sold their house and moved back to New York where they joined others fighting cop violence. "We had to get out the truth and get justice," she said.

"I said when we began that victory would come, and it did. You have to keep struggling because you know what you are doing is right." She then introduced others from the audience whose sons had died at the hands of the police.

Livoti, a representative of the cop's Patrolman Benevolent Association at his precinct, was dismissed from the police department last year after an internal investigation found he had used a prohibited choke hold on Baez.

At the federal civil rights trial the 12-person jury didn't take long to reach consensus. They were allowed to hear testimony

on the previous recorded and extensive police brutality complaints accumulated by Livoti, including use of a choke hold in another case. This had not been allowed by the judge at the non-jury criminal trial.

Three police officers who testified in Livoti's defense met several times in the aftermath of the killing. Commenting on the three witnesses Livoti's defense presented at the Bronx trial, a juror told the press, "All three lied. It wasn't just that they were trying to cover up for Livoti, but for themselves, because if they were witness to a crime, they were conspirators in the act."

Carol Sandoval, Anthony's aunt, stated, "Now we're going after the cops that perjured themselves."

The Baez family and their supporters will be marching as a contingent against police brutality at the upcoming Puerto Rican Day parade on August 2 in the Bronx. For more information call 718-364-2879.

700 attend Black Radical Congress

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

CHICAGO — More than 700 people gathered at the University of Illinois at Chicago for the Black Radical Congress June 19-21. Conference organizers included Jarvis Tyner, vice-chair of the Communist Party USA, Professors Manning Marable and Abdul Alkalimat, and leaders of Committees of Correspondence, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, New Afrikan People's Organization, and Black Workers for Justice.

Workshop discussions took up many topics including "Civil Rights, Affirmative Action and the California Initiative," "Black Radicalism, Black Workers and Today's Labor Movement," and "Socialism and Black Liberation." A couple hundred young people and others attended the gathering looking to discuss the fight for Black freedom as well as other developments in world politics. A few activists were also building the "Million Youth March" in New York set for September 5.

A petition campaign was projected to take place for a year starting in October 1998 "to bring 1,000,000 signatures to the United Nations charging the United States with violating the Human Rights of African American people."

At the final session, Marable announced that the group is planning future meetings in preparation for a larger assembly of the Black Radical Congress in the year 2000.

From Pathfinder

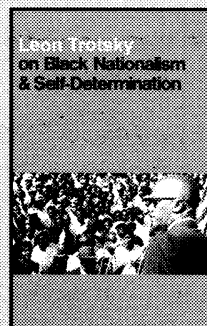
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Strike at GM

Continued from front page

of town, over similar issues. At the heart of the dispute is the company's demand that fewer workers produce more vehicles. GM wants to slash up to 50,000 hourly workers from the payroll in the coming years.

This is the 10th time in the last two years that UAW members have struck GM plants over the company's productivity demands. Most of these skirmishes ended with the company backing down. This time GM is looking to force the union to capitulate.

The stakes in the battle are high. GM is far behind its main competitors in cutting jobs, outsourcing parts production to lower-wage suppliers, and speeding up the lines. In 1997 General Motors averaged \$850 profit on each vehicle produced, compared to Ford Motor Co.'s average of \$1,520, according to Harbour & Associates Inc.

"Plants that continue to lose millions of dollars each year because of noncompetitive work practices prevent GM from being a strong contender in the marketplace," General Motors vice president Donald Hackworth declared in a recorded message to employees June 30. "We can no longer run our business that way," he added.

A July 1 news article in *USA Today* stated that "analysts applaud GM's tough stance with the union." Citing an interview with an auto industry analyst at Furman Selz, the article continued, "If GM doesn't come out of this strike with blatant work rule concessions from the United Auto Workers, [Maryann] Keller says, 'Then good-bye stock.'"

Three weeks after forcing Local 651 members onto the picket line, GM's stock price has fallen more than 10 percent while Ford's stock prices rose about 6 percent.

GM shuts assembly plants

Since the beginning of the strikes, GM has shuttered 26 of its 29 North American assembly plants and sections of more than 100 parts plants. Two other assembly plants closed June 29 for a two-week vacation break. The layoffs total 162,700 workers, including more than 10,000 in Canada and 32,000 in Mexico. As of June 30, the company had lost almost \$1.2 billion and the production of 227,000 vehicles.

As the third week of the strike was drawing to a close and with union officials suggesting that the work stoppage could last into August, GM made public announcements designed to pressure union officials and workers. On June 24 the company sent a letter to the UAW leadership at the union's convention in Las Vegas outlining plans to file a grievance under the national contract and demand expedited arbitration. The bosses charge the union with illegal tactics in violation of the 1996 agreement. They claim that the issues in Flint fall under the national agreement. Union tops dismissed the letter as a publicity move.

The same day the auto bosses announced that they would attempt to block state unemployment insurance payments for laid-off workers in the United States. The company tried this during the 17-day strike by UAW members in Dayton in 1996. GM failed in most states but was able to delay workers receiving their benefits. The company's move this time was offset somewhat by the state government in Michigan, which said that laid-off workers — but not strikers — would be eligible for weekly payments of up to \$300 per week. It is esti-

mated that as many as 100,000 workers across the state, both from GM plants and from independent parts suppliers, will qualify for jobless benefits. GM promised to appeal the Michigan Unemployment Agency ruling.

As the fourth week of the strike opened, GM's Hackworth ordered plant level bosses to send home any "nonessential" maintenance workers at closed factories, turn off power to machinery, and dim lights to save on utilities. This "cold shutdown" also affected plants not shut down due to the strike. As these plants closed for the vacation break, maintenance workers expecting to work the two weeks were sent home and planned maintenance was canceled. The vacation period is usually used to install new equipment and repair existing machinery. This followed announcements that the company was slashing "discretionary spending" to conserve cash during the strike.

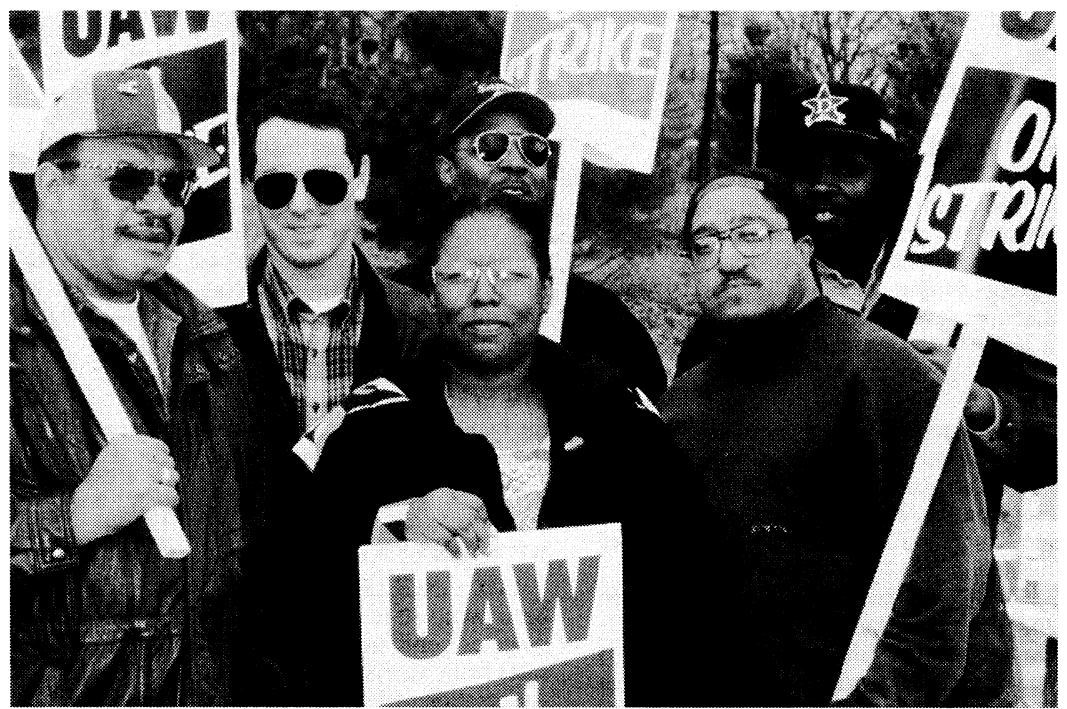
GM officials also announced that they were considering blocking health-care benefits for laid-off workers. Under the UAW national agreement, workers on short-term lay off continue to receive medical coverage. On June 29 the auto giant backed off its plan to slash health care for unemployed workers, but said this would be reviewed weekly. Dental benefits were cut.

Workers say: more jobs, no speedup

But UAW members don't seem intimidated by GM's moves or Wall Street's rumblings. On June 30 workers at two GM brake plants in Dayton, Ohio, voted to authorize their local union leadership to strike the plants. It was the 3,400 members of UAW Local 696 who struck for 17 days in March 1996. Now the issue is GM's refusal to add about 100 jobs to the plants, as had been agreed to in an October 1997 local contract. Union officials also report that the auto maker wants to outsource work presently done in the plant and reduce employment to 1,520 in a few years. Press reports indicate that about half the local membership voted even though many were on vacation shutdown. More than 80 percent of those voting favored of strike action. An Indianapolis, Indiana, UAW local will also be taking a strike authorization vote July 12.

Working conditions at GM have been worsening for years under the employer's drive for productivity gains. At the Metal Fabrication Center in Flint, bosses are demanding that workers give up production quotas that plant officials agreed to in the last local contract. Under the quota system, workers are only required to finish a set number of parts each day. The company claims some workers put in less than a full day's work but receive eight hours' pay.

Workers argue that conditions would make it dangerous to work any faster or harder. Randy Henry, a welder with 27 years



Rick Maks

GM workers have waged 10 local strikes in recent years, hampering the auto maker's drive to increase productivity and impose layoffs. Above, UAW members strike GM plant in Pontiac, Michigan, April 1997. In latest strikes, GM bosses are digging in for a serious battle.

seniority, told the *Flint Journal*, "They asked us to put out 20 percent more. They mentioned it for a day. [But if we attempted it] we'd probably die." The work is extremely hot. "I got to where I sweat in my helmet and it turns my helmet off," Henry declared. The welding helmets have electronic sensors that make it easier for workers to see their work.

Will DeLaVergne, who welds engine cradles in the plant, agreed. "They've even raised production to some extent," he said. If the unionists were forced to work non-stop for eight hours "the quality would go down — it's probably 120 degrees in there. You would drop if you had to weld like that all day."

It is conditions like these that keep the picket lines well staffed. Workers at the Metal Fabrication Center only have two gates to picket, so dozens walk the lines around the clock. At Delphi East, with many more gates spread around the complex, the picket lines are smaller but no less enthusiastic. Strikers wave to passing cars and trucks, and there is a constant blast of horns along the main roads at both complexes.

Strikers have also begun to draw up their own signs. Most focus on what strikers view as GM's approach to negotiations. One sign declares, "Your lies and deceit got us on the street." There are also some protectionist signs attacking the North American Free Trade Agreement, and demanding "Save Flint jobs."

Picket lines are magnet for solidarity

The picket lines are also a magnet for other workers. Picket captains maintain a sign-in sheet for guests. The names and union local numbers of dozens of recent visitors fill the pages.

Nine members of UAW Local 686 were on the lines June 27. They had piled into a van and traveled from the Delphi Thermal

Systems plant in Lockport, New York. David Smith explained that the group "felt that the brothers and sisters in Flint needed our help, so when we were laid off we didn't wait. We came straight here."

Press reports indicate that the U.S. border patrol has been slowing Canadian workers trying to visit the picket lines. On June 22 a group of about 20 members of the Canadian Auto Workers were delayed more than 30 minutes after telling the border cops where they were going. The crossing between Ontario and Michigan usually takes very little time.

Ian Bawden, who works at GM's Windsor, Ontario, transmission plant, explained, "We're laid off as of today, so we have a lot of free time to come over and assist. When we were on strike two years ago, the brothers and sisters from Flint came out to support us, and we owe them the same respect. We're all in this together."

Workers walking picket duty appreciate the solidarity. "We need all the support we can get," Charles Andis, who has worked at the Metal Fabrication Center for 22 years, said. "I'm sure we'll all be down there for them in the future if it comes to it. I think it's turned out to be one big union family."

On June 29 the chief negotiators for the union, UAW vice president Richard Shoemaker and the company's Gerald Knechtel, met for the first time in more than two weeks. There was no reported progress. But after the meeting the company announced that it would continue to make health-care payments and the union sent more than 200 more strikers back into the Delphi East complex to build parts for non-GM customers, including Chrysler and Harley-Davidson.

John Sarge is a member of UAW Local 900 in Wayne, Michigan. Frank Gorton a member of the UAW from Detroit and Priscilla Schenk contributed to this article.

United Auto Workers holds 32nd convention

BY JOHN SARGE

LAS VEGAS, Nevada — The United Auto Workers Union (UAW) 32nd Constitutional Convention opened here June 22 on day 17 of the strike by union members in

Flint, Michigan, against the world's largest automaker, General Motors. This fight was a major topic of informal discussion among the 2,000 delegates and guests.

The battle in Flint against GM's drive to downsize and slash its work force had little echo from the stage. UAW international president Stephen Yokich made it clear that the officialdom did not want a discussion of the struggle against the auto giant. About two-thirds of the way through his opening speech to the convention he said of the Flint strike, "We're in a struggle with General Motors right now on a local strike. This is not a national strike, it's a local strike."

The central points the officials wanted to discuss were the planned merger of the UAW with the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) and the International Association of Machinists (IAM) and how to win a Democratic Party majority in the U.S. Congress later this year.

Both USWA president George Becker and IAM president Tom Buffenbarger spoke, stressing their hope that the merger will give the labor officials more weight with Democratic Party politicians.

The convention was also the scene of speeches from Democratic officials, includ-

ing a short video presentation from U.S. president William Clinton, a speech from Richard Gephardt, and a major address by U.S. secretary of labor Alexis Herman.

The union amended its constitution to include the "Commonwealth of Puerto Rico" in its jurisdiction. The Puerto Rican flag was added to the podium. The UAW represents 13,000 workers on the island.

The delegates voted to extend the time between conventions and elections of international officers from three years to four. They also extended the minimum term for elected stewards and committee persons from one year to two.

As the convention drew to a close the big-business press reported GM plans to challenge the legality of the Flint strikes.

When a delegate from a GM assembly plant requested an update on the strike in Flint and suggestions for what the union could do to support the strikers Yokich reiterated, "We are not here to debate a local strike."

John Sarge is a member of UAW Local 900 at the Ford assembly plant in Wayne, Michigan. UAW members Carole Lesnick and Amanda Ulman contributed to this article.

WORKING-CLASS POLITICS AND THE TRADE UNIONS



The Eastern Airlines Strike

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE RANK-AND-FILE MACHINISTS AND GAINS FOR THE LABOR MOVEMENT
Ernie Mailhot, Judy Stranahan, and Jack Barnes

The story of the 686-day strike in which a rank-and-file resistance by Machinists prevented Eastern's union-busting onslaught from becoming the road to a profitable nonunion airline. \$9.95

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Socialists build active workers conference

Continued from front page
tion.

"So many workers showed up they couldn't all get into the union hall," reported Brad Downs, a laid-off GM worker at the Parma stamping plant in Cleveland. Downs said that several workers were angry about a report that GM will lay off at the plant despite agreements not to reduce the workforce.

Cincinnati *Militant* supporter Bobbi Sack said that one young woman who bought a paper on her way into the vote liked the coverage on the Cuban revolution. A day earlier Cincinnati supporters sold 11 copies of the *Militant* to Teamsters at UPS.

The *Cleveland Plain-Dealer* reported June 24 that a handbill distributed at the Dayton plants by the union said that GM is outsourcing work to subcontractors, and that the company proposed reducing the workforce from 3,300 to 1,520 by the end of 1999. The *Plain-Dealer* reported that Local 696 president Gary Hill said that a strike would not happen until the Flint strikes are settled.

On June 27 Young Socialist leader Sarah Katz spoke to a meeting on the Antioch College campus in Yellow Springs, Ohio. The meeting was put together by a YS supporter from Chicago who goes to school there. Eleven people came to the meeting, including a professor and his son, who is a high school student. Katz, who is a garment worker and a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees Local 69 in Chicago, said that students at Antioch were already planning to rent two vans to go to the July 25 march in Washington, D.C., to support independence for Puerto Rico and demand the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners. And four students said they are interested in the Pittsburgh conference.

Katz said she gave a short talk on the accelerating working-class resistance, pointing to the UAW strikes against GM in Flint, Michigan, and the United Steelworkers of America strike in Des Moines, Iowa, against Titan Tire. "People had a variety of political views," she said, "and we had a completely civil and rich discussion on how do you make social change. The discussion ranged from protecting 'U.S. jobs' to how socialists see the world today and the changes that are happening in Indonesia and Kosova."

Participants bought two copies of the *Militant* and two Pathfinder titles, *Cosmetics, Fashion, and the Exploitation of Women*, and *The Eastern Airlines Strike*.

With the conference fast approaching, socialist workers need to take advantage of every opportunity to reach out to students, youth, and workers about the event. The panel discussion on taking communist ideas

to today's working-class struggles and building a party structured to carry out mass work will be attractive to working people and youth who are looking for others who are serious about fighting against the conditions that capitalism is forcing on workers and farmers around the world.

Fund-raising for scholarships can assure that those who need financial help will be able to attend. The \$95 registration fee for the two-day conference includes the cost of four catered meals (see ad on page 5)



BY JOHN BENSON

LOS ANGELES — Workers who have been involved in different struggles in Los Angeles continue to read the *Militant*. A sales team returned to the Pacific Maritime Association offices in Long Beach on June 26 and sold 51 *Militants* to longshore workers. Workers were most interested in the ongoing coverage of the GM strikes, but there was also interest in the *Militant's* article on political developments in Australia.

Dock workers here had earlier refused to unload a ship from Australia loaded by strikebreakers. More than 250 *Militants* have been sold to Los Angeles-area longshore workers in the last two months.

Another team visited the picketline in Irvine at Rockwell's semiconductor plant, which has been on strike for more than a month now. Referring to the fact that the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers has no strike fund, Polly Chea, a

young woman from Cambodia who had fled after the Pol Pot regime forcibly evacuated the cities, said, "We've been through much worse. We can deal with this. We're going to stay out until this is done. We want to be treated as humans, not robots."

Another sales team returned to the Northwest Airlines reservation center, where workers who are members of the International Association of Machinists bought 15 papers.

A team to the Anheuser Busch brewery in Van Nuys discovered that there was a union meeting the next day to discuss a new company proposal. The first offer was voted down in May. Teamsters have been working without a contract since then. Many of the workers expressed the feeling that they should have gone on strike when the first proposal was voted down. Seven Teamsters bought the *Militant* because of the GM strike coverage.



BY KATHRYN CROWDER

NEW YORK — Two *Militant* supporters headed out to a hotel near JFK airport on June 28 to talk to members of the International Association of Machinists attending a "Town Hall" meeting called by IAM president Tom Buffenbarger.

Most of the workers who spoke to us on their way into the meeting were airline workers and many were angry and in a fighting mood. We got an enthusiastic response to the socialist newspaper as we shared information and experiences and talked about the increased resistance of workers from Flint

to Puerto Rico. Ten of the 30 workers attending the meeting bought the *Militant*, and we got out a lot of leaflets for the Socialist Workers campaign and about the Active Workers Conference in Pittsburgh.

Two cab drivers who have been involved in the fight against the city government's attack on their conditions of work got the *Militant* and directed us to the cab dispatching lot nearby. There we continued the discussions and eight more drivers bought the paper.



BY JOHN SARGE

DETROIT — Aided by two workers from the print shop in New York where the *Militant* is printed, Priscilla Schenk and Ryan Kelly, campaigners here had a successful last weekend of June reaching out to workers in the region.

On Saturday, after a short huddle, four supporters headed for Flint, the epicenter of the fight against GM. After visiting UAW Local 651's hall the socialist workers went out to the picket lines. Among the pickets were a group of nine members of UAW Local 686 from Medina, New York. One of them, David Smith, said that they came to Flint "to show some solidarity with our brothers and sisters out here on the line."

The team went to a shopping mall where 20 workers bought the *Militant* in about an hour. The next day another 15 workers bought the paper at the airport and another shopping area. A large majority of working people expressed their support for the fight by the UAW against the auto giant.

Washington launches missile attack on Iraq

Continued from front page

have resulted in the deaths of more than 1 million people. Lifting the sanctions is supposedly conditional upon verification by UN arms "inspectors" that Baghdad no longer possesses weapons of mass destruction."

Washington's latest military action against Iraq heightens tensions in the region and came one week after the chief United Nations "weapons inspector," Richard Butler, claimed U.S. Army laboratory tests proved that Baghdad had loaded poisonous VX nerve gas into missile warheads before the Gulf War. UN inspectors said they dug up missile fragments from a weapons dump in Nibai, Iraq, last March and shipped them to a U.S. Army laboratory, which claimed it found significant traces of VX.

"It's a nail in the coffin for Iraq's efforts to lift sanctions," declared U.S. ambassador

to the United Nations William Richardson.

Butler played a central role in preparing propaganda for U.S. war moves earlier this year. Without presenting any evidence, he claimed January 26 that the Iraqi government had biological weapons loaded onto missiles that could be put on mobile missile launchers and driven away to avoid being hit by bombs. He had also claimed that Baghdad was conducting "possible biological testing on human beings" at a prison facility, though other UN officials said his supposed evidence proved nothing.

The Clinton administration escalated its war threats in the name of destroying Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction." Washington amassed an armada of 30 warships, 450 warplanes, and 44,000 troops in the Persian Gulf region as the U.S. rulers prepared to launch massive bombing raids on the Iraqi

people under the pretext that Baghdad was supposedly hiding evidence that it had biological and chemical weapons. While Washington retreated from the immediate prospect of war, 22 U.S. warships, 162 warplanes, and 20,200 U.S. troops remain in the region today.

During the 1990-91 Gulf War, 1,203 U.S. war planes were joined by 800 others that dropped 88,500 tons of bombs over 43 days. This assault was followed by a four-day "ground war" that some U.S. military officials described as a "turkey shoot." More than 150,000 Iraqis were killed in that slaughter.

The U.S. military also used banned weapons and ammunition enriched with depleted uranium during the Gulf War, exposing vast tracts of Iraqi territory to the highly toxic chemical.

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MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

NEW JERSEY

Newark

An Eyewitness Report from Indonesia. Speaker: Naomi Craine, editor of the *Militant* newspaper, recently returned from a reporting trip from Indonesia. Fri., July 17, 7:30 p.m. 1930 87A Halsey St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (973) 643-3341.

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

Upsurge in Indonesia: An Eyewitness Account and Slide Show. Speaker: Patrick Brown, Communist League, a participant in the recent *Militant* reporting trip to Indonesia. Fri., July 10, 7 p.m. La Gonda Archade, 203 Karangahape Road. Donation: \$3. Tel (9) 379-3075.

Christchurch

Palestine 50 Years of Occupation. Representative, Young Socialists. Fri., July 10, 7 p.m. 199 High Street. Donation: \$3. Tel: (3) 365-6055.

—CALENDAR—

NEW YORK

Manhattan

Casa de las Américas invites you to commemorate July 26. Celebrate the revolutionary Cuban holiday marking the 45th anniversary of the attack led by Fidel Castro against the Moncada garrison. Sat., July 25, 8 p.m. Dinner and dance. Casa de las Américas. 104 West 14th St., 3rd Floor. Donation: \$15.00. For more information, call (212) 675-2584.

Pst! — Hey kids, check out the new software program, "Prudence." It's designed so that other users of the computer don't know it's there, no less that it's monitoring and

and, if so, which ones.

Thieves failing out? — Israeli Supreme Court justices are getting irked at having to give advance approval to illegal acts of torture by the security force, Shin Bet. "Why does the high court have to pull the parliament's chestnuts out of the fire?" complained one jurist. According to an Israeli human rights group, Shin Bet arrests up to 1,500 Palestinians a year, and 85 percent of these are tortured.

Maybe they'll become extinct — "Police officers are twice

as likely as other Americans to suffer heart attacks, strokes, and related cardiovascular diseases.... Researchers at Iowa State University cite the high stress of the job, and officers' tendency to smoke and eat at junk-food restaurants." — News item.

Reliving history — A London outfit is offering Diana Memorial Tours. A budget tour retraces the funeral route, stops at Buckingham and Kensington Palaces, and visits Harrod's department store. £19.50 (about \$32.37). A more substantial tour does the funeral route, hits the

palaces and Westminster Abbey, plus lunch at a royal garden. £58.50 (about \$97.11).

Ooh — Tiffany is offering a "brilliant cut diamond engagement ring in the Tiffany classic six-prong platinum setting. From \$850 to \$850,000."

Viable program — The British Labour Party government has a "New Deal" plan to put single-parent welfare recipients to work. A 10-month test run covering 72,000 families turned up jobs for less than 2 percent.

Eh? — Reporting on the projected "budget of the area's transit agency, the *Los Angeles Times* said it "concentrates on improving service while recommending layoffs and other austerity measures."

Really? — According to the European Union, the water at England's beaches are among the dirtiest in Europe (Only Sweden and Finland have worse.) Declared a delicate-tongued EU rep: "We are not saying anyone will die if they use these waters. But obviously, if the water is of insufficient quality you can say it's unfit to swim in."



Harry Ring

copying stuff from each web site they visit. You can use it to check if your parents are hitting porn sites

Why communists back Puerto Rican independence

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Socialist Workers Party in 1938. One of the points incorporated in the Declaration of Principles adopted at the party's first national convention in January of that year was unconditional support for the struggles of colonial peoples around the world, particularly in Puerto Rico and other nations exploited by U.S. imperialism. The excerpts below are from that section of the Declaration of Principles. The entire document can be found in *The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party* — Minutes

BOOK OF THE WEEK

and Resolutions, 1938-39. The book is copyright © 1982 by Pathfinder Press, and reprinted by permission.

Since war is inevitably bred by capitalist society, the only genuine struggle against war is precisely the struggle against the social system which breeds it, the struggle against capitalism and for socialism. Only through the elimination of the causes for war will war itself be done away with. Through socialism alone can mankind establish the foundations for enduring peace.

The SWP is against every imperialist war, and opposes all wars fought by any and all imperialist states, whether fascist or democratic, since such wars can only be reactionary in character and counter to the interests of the masses and of the revolution. In the imperialist United States, the SWP fights against war preparations and militarization; but at the same time always makes clear that war cannot be permanently prevented unless the imperialist government of the United States is overthrown and its place taken by a workers' state, that lasting peace is possible only under socialism.

Pacifism attempts to divorce the struggle against war from the prosecution of the class struggle against capitalism. In practice, therefore, pacifism is entirely futile and powerless against war itself, and still further, spreads illusions about the nature of war which divert the masses from the genuine struggle against it and play into the hands of

imperialism. The SWP, consequently, exposes the futility and illusions of pacifism. In the United States, pacifism is particularly dangerous because its ideas are so widespread and influential, and because it is in a sense the "official" imperialist doctrine — indeed, the ideological preparation for the next imperialist war bases itself largely on the notion that from the point of view of the United States it will be a "war for peace."

If, in spite of the efforts of the revolutionists and the militant workers, the U.S. government enters a new war, the SWP will not under any circumstances support that war but will on the contrary fight against it. The SWP will advocate the continuance of the class struggle during the war regardless of the consequences for the outcome of the American military struggle; and will try to prepare the masses to utilize the war crisis for the overthrow of U.S. capitalism and the victory of socialism.

The SWP opposes and will continue at all times to oppose every form of social patriotism, all advocacy of "national union" or "suspension of the class struggle" during wartime, and will make clear to the workers that no war conducted by the capitalist government of the United States can be to their interest, or can be other than a war for imperialist profit and plunder....

Colonial Peoples

The struggle against imperialist war is inseparable from the struggle against imperialism in general, and therefore, from support of the wars of enslaved peoples against their imperialist oppressors, of colonies against the nations which keep them in servitude, of nationalities, races, and minorities which suffer from the yoke of oppressors, of workers' states against capitalist states. The SWP is not neutral or indifferent in such wars, but actively supports the oppressed against the oppressors.

United States imperialism, exploiting the masses within its national boundaries, at the same time and to an even greater degree, exploits the peoples of Latin and Central America, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Liberia, the Philippines. These people are thus the potential allies of the American workers in the struggle against U.S. imperialism, and neither they nor the American workers can expect to win freedom except in joint combat against the common enemy. The SWP supports every progressive



October 1950 pro-independence uprising in Puerto Rico led by the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party that was brutally repressed by the colonial government. Since its founding the Socialist Workers Party has supported the Puerto Rican fight for independence.

struggle of these peoples. It stands for the immediate and unhampered right of self-determination for them, free from military, political, or economic intervention or pressure by the U.S. government. It stands for the immediate and unconditional independence of all the territories, colonies, and dependencies of the U.S. and for the withdrawal of all troops from them. It is opposed to any attempt by American imperialism, open or masked, to infringe upon the right of self-determination of any nation or people.

The revolutions in the colonies, semicolonies, and spheres of influence of United States imperialism are integrally and reciprocally related to the revolutionary

struggle against that imperialism at home. A successful revolution in the United States would be decisive for the emancipation of the toiling masses throughout Latin America; while, on the other hand, a revolution beginning in one of the Latin American countries, or in one of the colonies or semicolonies of the U.S., could spread throughout the continent and powerfully accelerate the development of the class struggle and the revolution within the United States. The SWP regards it, therefore, as a central task to aid and support the revolutionary movement in these nations and colonies, and to establish the closest relations with the revolutionists and revolutionary organizations within them.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



July 13, 1973

PARIS, July 5 — A mass meeting in defense of civil liberties called by the Comité de Defense des Libertés last night at the Cirque d'Hiver for 6:30 p.m. overflowed into the streets by 6:45 p.m. The conservative Paris daily *Le Figaro* reported the crowd at around 11,000. *L'Humanité*, newspaper of the Communist Party, described it as 15,000.

The two mass political parties of the left, the Communist Party and Socialist Party, and the massive trade union federations participated in the rally. Originally called in defense of civil liberties in general, following the government crackdown on the Ligue Communiste it became more and more focused as a protest against the dissolution of the Ligue.

The breadth of the defense came as a surprise to the government, which had no doubt expected a far smaller reaction from the mass working-class organizations. Speakers at last night's rally represented major components from the Union of the Left as well as civil liberties organizations.

France's largest labor federation, the CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail — General Confederation of Labor), was represented by René Buhl. Buhl described the "large scale antiunion offensive shown by

an escalation of deliberate repression. We don't think that you can substitute repression for political debate. The Ligue Communiste has the right to exist."



July 14, 1948

America's soft coal miners have again set an example of militant struggle for all labor and have chalked up their greatest wage victory in the face of the new Taft-Hartley Slave Labor Law.

Refusing to be intimidated by this infamous law, the miners showed their readiness to close down the pits by their preliminary 10-day strike prior to July 1. A full scale walkout was averted on July 8 only when the leading coal magnates capitulated to the full wage demands of the AFL United Mine Workers.

Of special significance is the contract clause wrested from the operators to protect the UMW from employers' damage suits for alleged violation of contracts, particularly in case of strikes. This clause designed to sidestep certain restrictions of the Taft-Hartley Act, provides that the contract is operative only "during such time as such persons (employees) are able and willing to work."

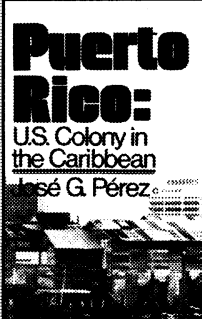
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Support the GM strikers

The fighting workers at General Motors need the support of the entire labor movement. Growing numbers of workers, in the auto industry and beyond, sense that the company is digging in for a hard fight, with the aim of dealing a serious blow to the United Auto Workers union. This many turn out to be a long strike.

The bosses at General Motors are driven by the inherent laws of the capitalist system — stiffer competition by Ford and Chrysler in the United States, and other rivals worldwide, in a world capitalist economy mired in depression conditions — to go for blood in this fight. Though they have slashed their workforce by nearly 300,000 over the last 20 years, the owners of the world's largest automaker are still far behind their main rivals in squeezing more profits out of each hour of workers' labor. That's why they are raising the stakes in the conflict, with the "cold shutdown" of plants and attempts to deny unemployment compensation to laid off workers, even though the battle has already cost nearly \$1.2 billion. GM can't afford to back down, as it has in many of the previous strikes by UAW members in recent years.

In this endeavor, GM has the backing of the entire employing class. After two decades of an unremitting offensive by the bosses, working people are today fighting back in growing numbers. Workers are more confident in their need to stand up to defend their lives and livelihoods against the effects of the "productivity gains" the bosses have wrested from the working class so far, and against their demands for further sacrifice. The ability of the bosses to hold off defensive actions by the working class seems to have been exhausted. The transit workers strike in Philadelphia against SEPTA, the 40,000-strong construction workers' demonstration in New York that took the city's rulers by surprise, and the simmering contract battle at Anheuser-Busch breweries are a few of the recent manifestations. GM and other employers need to deal a major

defeat to the working class to try to reverse this objective situation.

The auto giant says it needs workers to toil longer, harder, and for less pay in order to stay in business. Working people need to reject this framework, and instead start with what our class needs to keep life and limb together. Against the bosses' demands that pit one worker against another — employed against unemployed, workers in the United States against those in Mexico, and so on — the working-class needs a program that can unite working people internationally. This includes fighting for a shorter workweek — 30 hours work for 40 hours pay — to force the employers to hire more workers; defending and extending affirmative action for women, Blacks, and others who the bosses seek to justify paying less; and calling for the cancellation of the third world debt to the imperialist banks, which is strangling working people in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. These kind of demands aim to make the capitalist bosses pay the price for the economic crisis of their system, instead of taking it out of the hides of working people.

One of the advantages for the striking autoworkers, and other embattled working people, is that the walkout at GM overlaps with other several strike struggles — giving rank and file workers the chance to learn from their experiences and reinforce each other's struggle.

The *Militant* urges our readers to look for every opportunity to discuss the stakes in the GM strike with fellow workers and farmers, building solidarity with this fight. The *Militant* and the books published by Pathfinder Press are indispensable tools for workers in struggle. It's an important time to increase sales of the socialist press at plant gates and picket lines, in auto and other industries, and over the next week work to bring more of these fighters to the Active Workers Conference in Pittsburgh July 11-12.

Volunteers assume new responsibilities in book production

Continued from Page 4

printed using CTP technology, as joint products of volunteers and the print shop.

Print shop workers Eva Braiman, Bruce Kimball, Francisco Picado, and Bernie Senter took part in the meeting along with the members of the Bay Area steering committee. In addition, Toni Gorton, a laid-off auto worker in Detroit who is designing the templates for digital formatting of the books and has designed many of the Pathfinder book covers over the last decade; SWP leader Norton Sandler, a member of the International Association of Machinists in San Francisco, who has taken on the responsibility for the party's Political Committee to work with the volunteer organizers in the Bay Area; Margaret Jayko and Peggy Brundy, two of the volunteers in the Bay Area who have taken increasing responsibility for organizing aspects of the project; and the author of this article took part.

By the end of the meeting, Brundy joined the steering committee, which also includes Ruth Cheney, Jerry Gardner, and Tom Tomasko.

"The only way to accomplish the necessarily much-increased pace and scope of book production is by organizing every volunteer, in a much more timely and effective manner," said Cheney, organizer of the Bay Area steering committee, in a letter to volunteers (see excerpts below).

Drawing dozens of volunteers outside the Bay Area into taking new levels of responsibility, such as organizing the proofreading and formatting of entire books, "is what we set out to do after our three-day special meeting," said Brundy.

Seven volunteers in four cities in the United States and one in England have now agreed to do formatting. Some, like Janice Prescott in New York who works in desktop publishing, already have this skill from their jobs.

Response to 'call to action'

Within days of the June 26 letter, a number of people responded to the call by the steering committee to join a team that will put into electronic format the covers of Pathfinder books — a new task the volunteer organizers decided to take on.

"I have checked around and found someone who could help me learn Photoshop. We could get the software at a university discount. We could also get a scanner," said Anne Chase-Stapleton in a note to Cheney. "I do have good materials on book design, and have done brochures, newspaper ad layout, newsletters and graphic design for small businesses."

Stapleton, who lives in the outskirts of Seattle, now teaches art in college. Others who volunteered to join the team that will digitize book covers, which often involves redesigning, include Robin Maise from New York, who has a job as a desktop artist; and Greg Sack in Cincinnati who has worked in graphic arts for 25 years. Sack has also designed and painted many banners for SWP conventions and conferences over the years, as well as for other political activities.

At the Oakland meeting, the steering committee approved a proposal by Toni Gorton that volunteers will reconstruct digitally the design of most book covers on Pathfinder's back list. "This is much preferable to various scanning methods — copydot scanning of existing film or scanning of the previous printing," said Gorton. "It will be less costly and the quality of the final product will definitely be better."

As has been the case with other aspects of the project, volunteers who join the designing team are expected to use their own resources, or funds they can raise, to purchase needed computer equipment and software or finance travel, telephone calls, and other needs.

In a telephone interview on July 1, Stapleton said the reason so many supporters of the communist movement have stepped forward to help produce Pathfinder books is because of the pick up in the class struggle and the response Pathfinder books and the *Militant* is getting among working people in the United States and around the world. She had just heard on radio the news of the 40,000-strong demonstration by construction workers in New York. "There is a whole new mood in politics," she said.

U.S. Hands off Iraq!

Washington's June 30 missile attack on Iraq should be condemned by all working people. We should demand all U.S. troops get out of the Middle East.

The U.S. rulers' military probes against the Iraqi people are an extension of the bosses' push to squeeze more out of workers in the United States. Under the pressures of declining profit rates Washington, London, Bonn, Tokyo, and the other imperialist powers are driven to extract more value out of the laboring masses not just at home but around the world, from Indonesia to Mexico. They compete for markets, sources of raw materials, and domination of the semi-colonial world. The U.S. military arsenal is a club for use against those who refuse to follow Washington's dictates, as well as for maintaining its political and economic dominance in a declining social system.

The Clinton administration's war moves in the Arab-Persian Gulf are aimed not only at dominating the toilers of Iraq and other countries in the Mideast. Increasingly, Washington's target is the Russian workers state, where one-sixth of the earth's surface has been torn from the system of wage slavery. Just as GM's auto barons are pushing for a showdown with UAW members, Washington is on a collision course with the Russian workers.

Since workers and peasants took power in the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, the "fundamental attitude" of world capitalism has been "to attack Russia, overthrow the nationalized economy, restore a capitalist regime, smash the foreign trade monopoly, open up the Soviet Union as a market and field of investments, transform Russia into a

great colony, and thereby alleviate the crisis of world capitalism," explained communist leader James P. Cannon in the Pathfinder book, *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*.

The expansion of the NATO military alliance into Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic; U.S. troops occupying parts of Yugoslavia; and Washington's military moves in the Caspian Sea region are likewise aimed at tightening the imperialist noose around Russia. They are preparations for the day when the U.S. rulers will try to use military force to accomplish this task.

That's why it's important for working-class fighters to campaign using the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and the books and pamphlets distributed by Pathfinder to reach out to working people and tell the truth about Washington's military moves. These tools are key for drawing the lessons of past battles and to understanding the source of the intensified competition that is exacerbating capitalism's economic and social crisis. Washington's 1991 slaughter against the Iraqi people hailed the opening of new conflicts between imperialist powers that are provoked by the growing worldwide depression conditions. This deepening crisis can only be resolved in two ways — either by the wealthy classes around the world inflicting major defeats on the working class and labor movement or by toilers taking state power from the capitalists. In face of this, working people more than ever need to see ourselves as an international class that needs to unite workers and farmers across national boundaries to fight for the common interests of the exploited and oppressed, and struggle for a socialist world.

N.Y. construction workers protest

Continued from front page

sive size of the protest — attempted to halt construction workers at various points of the five-hour demonstration.

The administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani initially mobilized more than 500 cops, who treated the peaceful demonstration as a riot, and then doubled the number of cops to 1,000. News reports indicated that at least one construction worker was seriously injured when he was kicked in the head by a mounted cop's horse.

The construction workers explained they are fighting not only for their union jobs, but for future generations of workers. Mayor Giuliani claimed that construction work-

ers were attempting to shut down the city. Referring to a demonstration by taxi drivers a few weeks ago when at the mayor's instructions cops refused to allow cab drivers from Brooklyn to enter Manhattan, Giuliani said, "Had the construction workers given the same advance warning that the taxi drivers gave, they'd have been dealt with in the same way."

The class hatred shared by the big-business press for the construction workers permeated the news coverage. The *New York Times* claimed that the "rowdy" demonstration became an "embarrassment because the street chaos overshadowed the unions' message."

1,000 rally to support Titan strikers in Iowa

This column is devoted to reporting the resistance by working people to the employers' assault on their living standards, working conditions, and unions. We invite you to contribute

ing a striker, my dad. Whatever affects him trickles down and affects me."

The rally program included speeches by union officials and politicians including Jesse Jackson. A

ditions. The Commission announced May 7 that only about 1,200 workers will be rehired, and crews on fire engines would be reduced from four to three. Fewer firefighters will be rostered on overnight duties — the time when most serious fires causing death occur.

The firefighters have been actively reaching out to other unionists for support, for instance by holding gate meetings at factories and other worksites where they gained signatures for a petition they are circulating nationally against the cuts. The petition drive, launched in early May, has gathered more than 200,000 signatures.

John Roberts, an Engineers Union member from the auto components maker Yazaki who came to the march with a group of his co-workers, told *The Militant*, "I've always been a unionist. I couldn't believe it when I heard they were going to slash all those firefighters' jobs."

Yazaki itself is slated to close in November with the loss of 430 jobs. Roberts blamed the impending closure on the removal of protective tariffs by the government. "We can't compete with the \$1.50 [US\$0.75] they pay in Samoa," Yazaki has a large factory in that Pacific island nation. "I don't blame those workers in Samoa," Roberts added. "They need jobs too."

The day before the marches there were signs that the government and the Fire Service Commission were beginning to retreat in the face of the firefighters' campaign. The Commission announced that the number of jobs would be cut to 1,260 instead of 1,200, and that in some cases truck crews could remain at four. The Professional Firefighters Union labeled these new proposals "unacceptable."

Addressing the Auckland rally, the union's national president, Mike McEnaney, a working firefighter, said, "This fight has only started. We're only just warming up."

...and in Christchurch

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand — More than 200 uniformed firefighters from Christchurch, Timaru, and Nelson led a spirited march of up to 1,000 people through the main street here June 26. They were protesting planned cuts to



Militant/Craig Honts

IBEW members on strike against Rockwell Collins in Newport Beach, California, picket plant with supporters in early June. Rockwell workers won strike and returned to work June 12. Forty-five members of IBEW Local 1634 who struck Rockwell in Coralville, Iowa, took bus and joined June 27 rally in Des Moines, Iowa, to support steelworkers who have struck Titan Tire there since May 1.

ON THE PICKET LINE

short items to this column as a way for other fighting workers around the world to read about and learn from these important struggles. Jot down a few lines about what is happening in your union, at your workplace, or other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

DES MOINES — Some 1,000 strikers, family members, and other unionists joined a June 27 rally here in support of striking steelworkers. The 670 members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 164 have been on strike against Titan Tire since May 1 in a battle against forced overtime and two-tier wages, and for pension and health care benefits.

The rally featured a march from the Local 164 union hall to the Titan plant, led by a hearse carrying a coffin containing Titan's "last, best, and final" contract offer. This scheme had been presented to the unionists June 10.

The rally followed a week of growing tensions on the picket line. In response to a Titan ultimatum to return to work or face replacement, more than 250 strikers rallied at the plant June 21 at the time the unionists were ordered by Titan president Gary Carlson to return. Then, on June 22, a woman driving through the line to pick up her strike-breaking husband attacked a Local 164 picket. The incident was played on Des Moines TV news repeatedly.

Titan has charged Local 164 with violating an injunction restricting union picketing at the plant. A court hearing is set for June 29.

Other area unionists participating in the rally included members from a number of locals of the USWA; International Brotherhood of Teamsters; United Auto Workers; American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees; International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW); and others.

A special welcome was given to 45 members of IBEW Local 1634 who came by bus from Coralville, Iowa. These workers won a 12-day strike against Rockwell Collins June 12, in a fight for wage increases and health care benefits. Lee Kohl, a spokesman for Local 1634, said coming to the rally was in thanks for the support they received in their fight.

Family and friends of Local 164 strikers turned out in big numbers. Pat Gilman said, "I'm here support-

number of unions came forward with donations for the Local 164 strike fund. More than \$2,000 was presented from a gate collection among members of UAW Local 450 at the John Deere Des Moines Works.

At the Bridgestone/Firestone plant across town, the company had refused to allow a gate collection by USWA Local 310, but unionists mobilized a large crew of collectors and went ahead with the fundraising anyway. Some \$2,800 was collected over two days there. Polk County sheriffs were called in to remove the "trespassers." Local 310 collectors got a TV news crew out to cover the confrontation, and the cops took no action against the steelworkers.

Firefighters rally against cutbacks in Auckland...

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Chanting, "They say cut back, we say fight back," 1,000 unionists and supporters marched in downtown Auckland June 26 to protest attacks by the government on firefighters. The trade union action was sponsored by the Council of Trade Unions, and led by 400 uniformed firefighters. Similar actions were held in Wellington and Christchurch. In Dunedin, according to the June 27 *New Zealand Herald*, 2,000 marched.

Unionists at several workplaces in Auckland organized transportation to bring them to the event. A busload of workers from the BHP steel mill at Glenbrook took four hours off work to attend. Sixty workers were bused in from the naval dockyard at Devonport. Last year maintenance workers at the facility were locked out for eight days by their employer, the contracting firm Babcocks, in an attempt to impose concessions during contract negotiations. Marcel, a Babcocks worker, told the *Militant* why he had come to the firefighters' march: "For me personally it's like returning support for the support they gave us. We need it more than ever now — they try to break you into little groups and deal with you individually."

The June 26 marches were the latest in a series of protest actions organized by the Professional Firefighters Union in response to plans by their employer, the Fire Service Commission, to sack its entire front-line work force of 1,575 firefighters on July 1 and force them to reapply for their jobs on new terms and con-

firefighters' jobs and working conditions.

Both national trade union federations were represented on the march and union banners included those of waterfront workers, health workers, Finsec, the bank officers' union, and the National Distribution Union. Several Christchurch city councilors and members of parliament from the Labour and Alliance parties also marched and spoke at a rally at the end.

Contingents of volunteer firefighters from throughout the region took part in the protest. "There's overwhelming support for the firefighters among the volunteers, from what I can see," Gavin Lockton, the training officer for Governors Bay volunteer firefighters, told the *Militant*.

Gary Pascoe, a seasonal and casual worker on the waterfront, explained that he had heard the march advertised on the radio and had come along to show his support. Volunteer firefighters should withdraw their labor in support of the professional firefighters, he said. "That would bring things to a halt pretty quickly."

Volunteers make up 80 percent of the total number of firefighters in New Zealand, although they only take 20 percent of the callouts. Many parts of the country, including quite large urban centers, are only covered by volunteers.

Speaking at a Militant Labor Forum later that day, Jim Ryburn, the vice-president of the southern region of the Professional Firefighters' Union, described public support for their fight as "absolutely fantastic. It puts us under an obligation to do our very best."

Safety is a key issue in the dispute, Ryburn told the meeting. Since 1995 the number of professional firefighters in New Zealand has dropped by over 400 to about 1,550 today. "If the cuts go through, there will be fewer full-time firefighters in Christchurch than at the time of the Ballantynes' fire in 1947." (Ballantynes is a leading department store in central Christchurch. A fire there in 1947 left over 20 people dead.) The proposed cuts also target the firefighters' union, Ryburn explained. Union spokespeople have been unofficially warned that there will be no jobs for them in the restructured fire service.

In recent weeks the firefighters' union has organized a series of public meetings throughout Christchurch to explain the issues involved in the proposed restructuring of the fire service. The electorate offices of members of parliament belonging to the governing coalition have also been picketed.

The last strike action by professional firefighters was in 1976. "Firefighters don't want to strike because of the safety issues involved, and because it could cost us public support," Ryburn said. "But, in the end, it may be an action we have to take if they keep pushing us. When it comes down to it, you have to take a stand."

Florida microchip workers win strike

MIAMI — On June 21 some 1,000 members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) local 2000 returned to work at the Cirent Semiconductor plant in Orlando, Florida after an eight-day strike. The IBEW organizes 1,020 of the plant's 1,600 employees, who produce microchips for cellular phones and pagers. This was the second work stoppage in less than two weeks at the plant, which is one Orlando's largest manufacturers. On June 1 a two-and-a-half-hour strike ended when Lucent Technologies, Cirent's parent company, reached an agreement with the IBEW and the Communications Workers of America on a national contract involving some 43,000 workers.

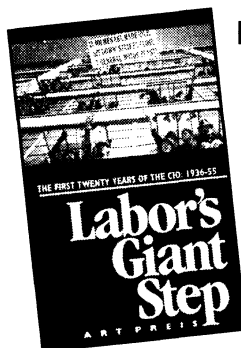
The Orlando workers rejected the proposed local version of this contract and walked out despite the recommendation of the union leadership to endorse it. Workers demanded more promotion opportunities and better working conditions, including job postings and assignments. Hundreds of plant foremen and engineers tried to keep the operation running.

The workers' demands were finally met by the company, which also offered a \$25,000 incentive for the next 180 workers who retire during the course of the five-year contract.

The terms of the national agreement, also approved by the Orlando workers, included an 18.7 percent pay raise over five years, a 20 percent increase in pension benefits, and improved health-care benefits. Lucent Technologies, which sells services and makes equipment and microchips for the telecommunications industry, has seen its stock increase 400 percent since it was created out of AT&T in 1996.

Ray Parsons, member of USWA Local 310 in Des Moines; Terry Coggan, member of the Engineers Union in Auckland; Joan Shields, member of the Meat Workers Union in Christchurch; and Bill Kalman, member of the United Transportation Union Local 1138 in Miami contributed to this column.

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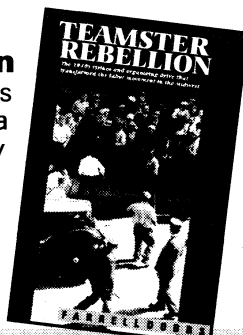
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Nationalists defend their communities against rightist parades in N. Ireland

BY PAUL DAVIES

MANCHESTER, England — More than 1,000 British soldiers have been drafted into Portadown, Northern Ireland, in the run up to the planned Orange Order march along the Garvaghy Road in that town July 5. The Orange Order is a rightist organization that holds sectarian and triumphalist marches through Catholic communities in Northern Ireland. The Garvaghy Road, is home to around 6,000 people, almost all of whom are Catholic. Residents have mobilized annually for the past few years to try to prevent the march from going through their community.

The Parades Commission, established last year by the British government, ruled in late June that the Orange Order parade should be rerouted. However the Orange Order has vowed that it will go ahead with the march as it did in 1996 despite a ban by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). The cop force later relented, as tens of thousands of Orange men mobilized to drive their parade through the Catholic area.

After the Parades Commission announcement scores of new Irish Tricolors were hung from lampposts and rooftops along the Garvaghy Road. An elderly man there who was pleased with the decision explained how the residents had originally been "pushed into this area and now the [Orange Order] want to walk all over us."

Fostering anti-Catholic discrimination and caste-like privileges for the Protestant population has been a pillar of British rule in Northern Ireland. The yearly marches by the Orange Order and other pro-British groups — aimed at intimidating the nationalist community and reinforcing this divide — have become a flashpoint in the Irish nationalist struggle.

Residents organize to counter parade

Breandan MacCionnaith, representing the Garvaghy Road residents' organization, explained, "People here are very apprehensive But they are also resolute in their determination that there is not going to be a march down this road." Following the Parades Commission decision to reroute the march MacCionnaith said, "We are not gloating in any way, but this is an acid test for [British prime minister] Tony Blair and the Good Friday Agreement. He must use all his resources to make sure that this ban is observed. We will continue with our protest on Saturday because we do not trust [RUC chief] Ronnie Flanagan not to push the



At right, supporters of a united Ireland are attacked by the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Belfast June 27 as they protest Orange Order march through their neighborhood. Nationalists have been pressing their demands to reroute the rightist parades and disband the RUC. Above, activists hold a "white-line" picket along center of Falls Road in Belfast in April calling for end to RUC and the release of political prisoners.

march through on the day."

At its previous meetings the residents association has discussed mobilizing nationalists from other parts of Northern Ireland, and in recent weeks representatives from the association have traveled across the six counties to win support.

The Orange Order has begun planning scores of illegal marches July 5 in anticipation that their march along the Garvaghy Road would be rerouted. In a green light to the Orange Order, RUC chief Flanagan, speaking on U.S. television the previous week, said that he would overrule any decision by the Parades Commission to reroute the march if the Orange Order organized mass intimidation to press ahead, as they did in 1996. The nationalist newspaper *An Phoblacht/Republican News* reported that pro-British loyalists are believed to be organizing a rally to block access to Belfast International Airport.

Around 200 nationalist residents of the Springfield Road area of western Belfast

were assaulted by the RUC June 27 as the police drove an Orange Order march through the Catholic community. They were protesting as RUC cops equipped in riot gear cleared the roads to enforce the Parades Commission order to allow the march, despite residents' objections. On the eve of every parade that goes through Springfield Road, the RUC swarm into the area and impose a virtual curfew on residents, who are then open to abuse and stoning from loyalists on the parade. A recent survey found that 98 percent of residents opposed the parade, but the Parades Commission described the area as "mixed." The Springfield Residents Action Group has organized a series of protest pickets in the days running up to the Orange Order march.

Sinn Fein gains in N. Ireland vote

The RUC actions on the Springfield Road came hours after the final count in the first election to the Northern Ireland Assembly, established by the recent agreement signed by the British and Irish governments and political parties in Northern Ireland. The election saw Sinn Fein, the party that is leading the struggle to end British rule in Ireland, win its highest share of first preference votes ever. It will have 18 seats in the new 108-member assembly, making it the fourth largest party. The reformist Social Democratic and Labour Party won the highest share of first preference votes for the first time ever.

Commenting on the results, Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams said, "The big story is that nationalists are resurgent and that both nationalist parties have increased their vote, as we have in previous elections. I think there's that sense of assertiveness and confidence within nationalists and we're a part of that."

Through the election Sinn Fein had campaigned for the disbanding of the RUC and for demilitarization. They pointed out that the British army still patrols the streets, that military fortifications continue to be built, and that approximately 130,000 licensed weapons remain in the hands of unionists.

However, under the system of election by proportional representation, the

largest party in the assembly will be the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), which supports the continued "union" of Northern Ireland with the United Kingdom. The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), led by the rightist Ian Paisley, which opposes the agreement that establishes the assembly, won 20 seats. The first results that were announced aroused fears in the big-business press that the DUP would win enough votes to control an effective veto in the assembly.

The election results reveal a further fragmenting of Unionist forces. In some constituencies up to seven different Unionist parties stood candidates. As the results came in, leading figures in the UUP began to turn on one another. The party's deputy leader, Jeffrey Donaldson, who opposes the agree-

ment, launched an attack on the party's campaign manager, while party leader David Trimble was heckled in his own constituency.

Trimble made an unprecedented move following the election, publicly attacking the Conservative Party in Britain for voting against the Labour government's bill in Parliament that codified the release of Irish political prisoners. His attack underlines the extent to which his party has begun to break its traditional re-

lationship with the Conservatives.

The Conservative decision to break the bipartisan consensus on Northern Ireland and vote against the government on the release of political prisoners reflects a growing fracturing in British ruling class forces about how to maintain their rule in Northern Ireland in the face of continuing nationalist resistance. The Conservative decision was denounced by Northern Ireland Secretary Marjorie Mowlam, who said she was disappointed "that the bipartisan approach may be in doubt." Conservative Party leader William Hague and half his shadow cabinet did not turn up in Parliament to participate in the vote on the bill.

'Decommissioning' demand is obstacle

Trimble has claimed that the UUP will not sit in government with Sinn Fein until the Irish Republican Army (IRA) hands in its weapons. Echoing this stance, the *Observer* newspaper in an editorial demanded that Sinn Fein leaders be blocked from taking their place in the assembly's executive until they had said that "the war is over."

At a republican rally at Bodinstown, Sinn Fein president Adams spoke out against attempts to use the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons to block Sinn Fein from exercising its rights. "Decommissioning is being used as it was before, as an obstacle," he said. "It is not a desire for security or an abhorrence of violence that motivates those who want to use decommissioning as a precondition, but a desire to bring the momentum towards justice and equality to a shuddering halt."

On the day of the election the British courts sentenced James McArdle, a farm laborer, to 25 years imprisonment for conspiracy following his arrest in connection with the IRA bombing of Canary Wharf, London, in 1996. The only evidence against McArdle was that he had driven a truck that was later used in the bombing.

On the morning of June 29, youths in the nationalist Kilwilkie estate of Lurgan fought with the RUC after being subjected to police harassment, including house-to-house searches in the area. Following a standoff, the RUC cops were forced to withdraw.

Paul Davies is a member of the Amalgamated Electrical and Engineering Union.

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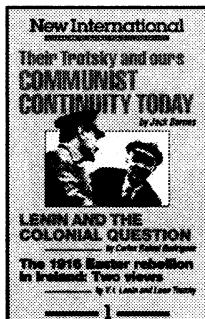
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